the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 26, 2005

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DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA?
LEON ARON

The Future of New Orleans

JAMES R. STONER JR.
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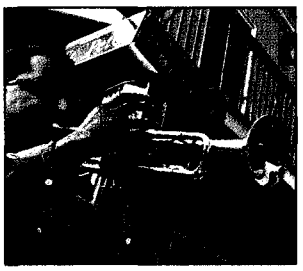

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Harvard's Al Qaeda Apologist

After four long and bloody years of unresolved war, shouldn't America begin thinking about the possibility of an equitable diplomatic settlement with Osama bin Laden? Isn't it finally "Time to Talk to Al Qaeda?" So asks the headline on a *Boston Globe* op-ed piece published September 14. And so answers its author, Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou of Harvard University: Yes, he says. Let's make a deal.

Bid Laden and his confederates are widely "misunderstood" in the United States, according to Mohamedou, associate director of Harvard's "Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research." We like to flatter ourselves that the war on terrorism is "an open-and-shut matter of good versus evil," but the truth is very different, he suggests. Al Qaeda is not, in fact, a totalitarian and "apocalyptic" movement; it is an "industrious" and "committed" rational actor pursuing "political" and "limited" objectives. And September 11 "was not an unprovoked, gratuitous act." Rather, the murder of 3,000 office workers in New York is best understood as a "trained commando" operation "in the context of a war that had twice been declared officially and publicly."

And there being no realistic way for Americans to win such a war—against a "diffuse, ever-mutating, organized international militancy movement" enjoying "the rear-guard sympathy of large numbers of Muslims"—it becomes the better part of wisdom for us to seek a truce with al Qaeda in return for "some degree of satisfaction regarding its grievances."

THE SCRAPBOOK knows what you're thinking here: There's a numbskull on the Harvard payroll. Been there, done that.

But wait. There's more. This is new. This is worse.

For it turns out that Dr. Mohamedou's *Globe* op-ed is merely the condensed version of "Non-Linearity of Engagement," a 30-page treatise he produced, on Harvard's dime, back in July. And "numbskull" doesn't begin to describe the thing. It seems that Harvard University's associate director of "humanitarian policy" and whatnot believes the United States should belatedly "acknowledg[e] the logic in which terrorism is used as a method of warfare, according to a principle of indiscrimination whose rationale is negation of the notion of innocence of the civilian population, and imputation of collective responsibility." As Osama bin Laden himself has observed, American foreign policy is effected by politicians whom Americans have freely elected. And in that respect, concludes our man in Cambridge, al Qaeda clearly claims "a valid *jus ad bellum* case" against any and every one of us—man, woman, or child.

In the end, Mohamedou says, "these 'terrorists' are *de facto* combatants, and justice . . . is what they are after." Which is the true source of bin Laden's strength. And the reason that "no leading Muslim intellectual or scholar has denounced him."

Not at Harvard, anyhow. ♦

CAIR's Interfaith Photo-Retouching

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) often chooses curious means to further its self-proclaimed mission of "enhancing understanding of Islam" and "encouraging dialogue." But this may be the most curious of all.

An eagle-eyed reader of the website *jihadwatch.org* noticed last week on the CAIR website a photo taken at CAIR's "interfaith candlelight vigil" commemorating 9/11 on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol (see leftmost photo). Unfortunately, the group turned out to have been a little *too* interfaith for the tastes of CAIR's website.

As can be seen by close examination of the "improved" photo on the right (which at first accompanied the press release on the event but subsequently was removed from CAIR's website), a *hijab* was photoshopped onto the woman beside the CAIR lectern and onto two members of the audience: the brunette in the lower left foreground and the blonde in the lower right.

Women contemplating attendance at future CAIR outreach events should consider themselves forewarned—if you don't cover your heads beforehand, they may do it for you after the fact. ♦

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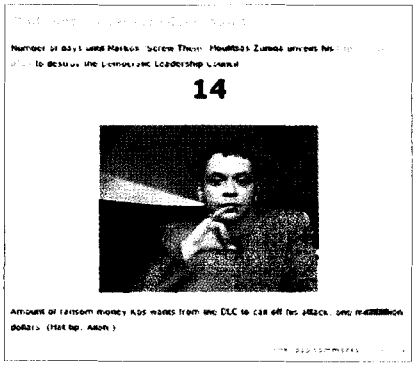
Kos Fires Blanks

THE SCRAPBOOK has been waiting with bated breath since August 22, when lefty blogger and Democratic-strategist-on-the-make Markos "Kos" Moulitsas of *DailyKos.com* announced an imminent campaign to make the centrist Democratic Leadership Council "radioactive." Moulitsas's hatred of the DLC was nothing new. Last May he wrote that it was "Time for the DLC to die," that it's "the most fundamentalist organization within the [Democratic] caucus," that it's "ideologically rigid," indeed "cancerous," and that it's past time to "euthanize" it. What was new about Moulitsas's August post, though, was that it promised all-out war between liberals and moderates by the beginning of September. "Two more weeks, folks, before we take them on, head on," he wrote. (This led to the mocking graphic by *LittleGreenFootballs.com* pictured at bottom.)



Well, over two weeks have passed, and plenty of people—Moulitsas's own readers included—have noticed that the DLC is still here. "Whatever happened," for example, "with the DLC thing from a few weeks ago," someone called "airwave" asked on a *DailyKos.com* message board on September 13?

"I didn't think a time of national crisis was the right time to do this," Moulitsas answered. Because, you see, "timing is important for things like media attention, people's attention, outrage generation, etc. The window wasn't there. Bush and his mishandling of Katrina is clearly more important now. So is the future of the Supreme Court." The anti-DLC campaign "isn't forgotten," he concluded. "Just deferred."

But, as any evil mastermind will tell you, having a catastrophic hurricane mess up your plans for world domination is no fun at all. Thus it wasn't a surprise when Moulitsas felt it necessary the following day—in comments appended to a post in which he labeled St. Paul's Democratic mayor Randy Kelly a "turncoat" (Kelly having committed the crime of endorsing George W. Bush last year)—to reiterate that, yes, he really will turn the DLC into Chernobyl one of these days, just you wait and see:

> I've laid off the DLC for the time being. The Katrina disaster has not only made this sort of intraparty fight a bit counterproductive at the moment, but it has refocused the allies and the media I was going to engage in the campaign to the more important task of getting to the bottom of the disaster on the gulf coast. The window has closed for now.

Hmmm. Who wants to bet that it won't open anytime soon? ♦

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Casual

The Taser's Edge

Not long ago, TASER International requested a meeting with this magazine, and the honor fell to me. It seems the folks at TASER have contended with some bad publicity of late, and they're making an effort to rehabilitate their "nonlethal" product in the eyes of a wary public. To that end, the president of the company, Rick Smith, and his publicist came over to persuade me of the merits of their stun gun.

First they tried to blind me with science—easily done. Next they softened me up with video of a few "perps" doing the electric boogaloo. Finally, they planned to finish the interview by giving me a chance to hold the weapon in my own hands. An effective strategy for dealing with a less dedicated journalist, I'm sure, but I was resolved to go all the way and find out for myself just how "nonlethal" this weapon really was.

Our meeting started with a PowerPoint presentation on the technical specifications of the TASER. There was some discussion of "electromuscular disruption," or EMD for short, a bit about "shape-pulse technology," and then an explanation of joules, volts, and watts.

Now, it's true I have acquired a measure of familiarity with firearms that I would guess is unusual among American Jewry. Talk to me about anything from a shotgun, to a .44 magnum revolver, to a .50 caliber rifle, and I've got a pretty good idea of the magnitude of the weapon in question. But mention joules and watts—well, you've lost me. I couldn't quite grasp the science in high school, and I haven't tried since. But I listened patiently, and all those watts and joules were still rattling around in my head at the end of our interview while they wired me up to experience the product.

The fact is, I'm fascinated by electricity. I have been since I was about five years old and got my first electrical appliance—a digital alarm clock. It was placed on the nightstand just to the right of my bed, and as soon as my parents tucked me in for the night I gave in to an overwhelming curiosity that had been building all day.

Darren Gygi

I started to fiddle with the cord coming out of the back of the clock. I followed it all the way to the plug protruding from the outlet just behind my head. In the dark, I managed to get one of my little fingers in between the prongs.

What followed was a shriek so high-pitched it would have inspired envy in a castrato. When my parents rushed in and discovered I'd electrified myself, they comforted me—and moved the clock across the room. Funny thing, though: As soon as they left me alone again I began to reflect on the strange sensation that had coursed through my hand. Was it really that bad? Why was I crying?

Should I do it again?

I can hardly remember anything from my early childhood, but, to paraphrase John Kerry, that night is seared—seared—into my memory. I can say with some confidence that it is the source of what, in retrospect, appears to be a long-standing ambivalence about the dangers of electricity. At summer camp I micturated on the electric fence used to keep the horses in their paddock—not something a precocious child would do, but I thought it brave. Last year I got an electric fly swatter. It's shaped like a tennis racket and draws on two AA batteries to produce a spectacular shock. I have no sympathy for the bugs, but I still felt compelled to taste my own medicine (and give my friends a taste, too).

All of this came rushing back as Rick was connecting the apparatus. He attached one wire to my belt and another to the sock on my left foot. The wires led back to the TASER X26, a device capable of producing a charge of 5 watts and .36 joules per pulse, numbers that were utterly meaningless to me, but that Rick said corresponded to a jolt that could do no permanent damage. A crowd gathered round. And then . . . that very same shriek I had produced all those years ago.

The pain was excruciating. Still, as advertised, the dose was nonlethal. The tingling in my leg persisted for only a few minutes, while a certain giddiness lasted well into the evening.

Maybe that's why I came away from this exercise in leave-no-stone-unturned journalism utterly sold, convinced that the TASER is a technological marvel, small enough to fit in a woman's purse, capable of completely debilitating its target, and, in the event of an accidental discharge, perfectly safe. But please—don't try this at home.

Michael Goldfarb

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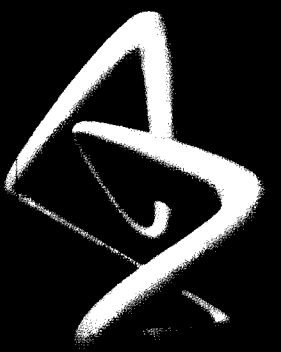
What does this stand for?



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Sakharov and the Gipper

Reading Harvey Klehr's interesting review of *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* ("Sakharov Watch," Sept. 5 / Sept. 12) brings to mind an exciting and memorable occasion at the end of the Gorbachev-Reagan meeting in Moscow in 1988 during which one of our arms reduction treaties was signed.

The custom called for the United States to host a U.S. Embassy dinner on the last night of the event to match the introductory Gorbachev-hosted dinner at the Kremlin shortly after our arrival. President Reagan instructed our ambassador that he wanted the Moscow leadership of the human rights campaign to be invited to that dinner and to be spread throughout each table, alongside Soviet officials. At the reception prior to the dinner, I noticed Andrei Sakharov and his wife Elena Bonner entering the residence. I greeted them and then brought them with me on the receiving line that was being formed. I asked Dr. Sakharov if he had ever met Gorbachev, and he said that he had not.

When we reached President and Mrs. Reagan, I identified our guests, and the president quickly responded with a handshake, smile, and an embrace, which he immediately followed by turning to the Gorbachevs, who were standing next to him. He then said something like: "President Gorbachev, I'd like you to meet two of your constituents!" I did not understand the conversation in Russian between Gorbachev and the Sakharovs, but the smiles and the immediate warmth have remained with me.

Max M. Kampelman
Washington, DC

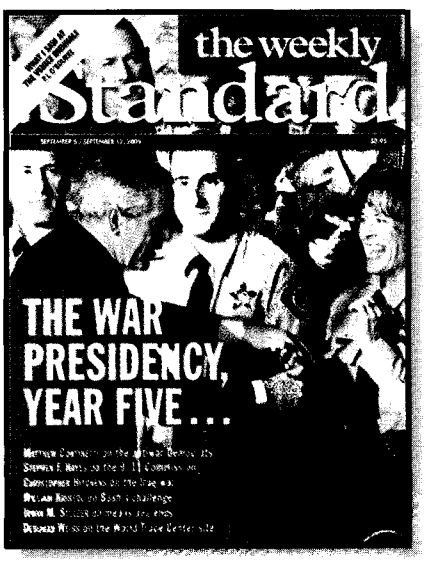
Who's Your Cheapskate?

Having lived in Indiana since 1981 and being the father of a true Hoosier, I enjoyed Andrew Ferguson's "Hoosier Daddy?" (Aug. 29). I thought, though, that his last sentence must be purely rhetorical, when he writes of the permanent cut-off of funds from the state-subsidized, tourist-attracting play, "Young Abe Lincoln." Ferguson wonders why the state legislature does not see why the play's value should warrant state subsidy.

The answer could have come from anyone walking the halls of The Weekly Standard: Mitch Daniels, the new Republican governor of the state, doesn't like deficits and certainly doesn't want his state's funds to subsidize the arts, however well meaning.

If "Young Abe Lincoln" can't succeed on its own, it's gone—as it is.

William O'Rourke
Notre Dame, IN



Mauling the Mall

Regarding Andrew Ferguson's "The Mess on the Mall" (Aug. 15 / Aug. 22): I have visited Washington, D.C., sporadically over the past 15 years or so, and my recent visit with my two young children was a great letdown for me. I could not understand why the national mall was in such a bleak condition.

It was fenced off, roped off, barricaded, and covered with trash and large areas of bare dirt. Even the reflecting pool was stagnant. I am not an activist, but I hope we can turn around the horrible condition of the mall so I can bring my children back and show them what a great place it really is. Monuments are needed and appropriate, but what next? A monument to PBS?

John M. Murray
Binghamton, NY

The idea of a Third Century Mall is interesting, but the question arises: How long would it take us to despoil that additional space with an array of tasteless, oversized monuments to events or causes or people that may or may not deserve to be so honored?

The best excuse available today for not satisfying some "injured" group's demand for a monument or a museum is that there is really no room for it on the mall—but that excuse would lose all validity if we expanded the available space. Isn't enough, enough?

Lynda Meyers
Arlington, VA

Build Up That Wall?

I am surprised that Matt Labash did not go on to recommend the immediate construction of an Israeli-style wall along our southern border with Mexico ("North of the Border," Aug. 29)—and I'm even more surprised that The Weekly Standard has not editorially advocated it long before now. As Labash points out, "building a Texas-to-California border wall like the one around the West Bank" would have an estimated cost of $2 billion to $8 billion, which "would still be considerably less than the $20 billion we pay annually in social services for illegals."

Both our 2,000-mile border with Mexico and our 3,000-mile border with Canada could be sealed tight as a drum, just like Israel's 245-mile border with Palestine, at a per-capita cost that would be a fraction of what the Israelis are paying.

The liberal media claim that America's economy would collapse without the Latino invasion, because Americans will not do the jobs they fill. Wrong. Did those jobs go unfilled in the decades and centuries before the coming of the Latinos? All of the country's work is always done—at market

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price. Not a single chicken-processing plant or tomato farm in America would be shut down by an Israeli-style wall: A few cents would be added to consumer prices. That's it—no disruption of the economy, no industries bereft of workers.

CHARLES MUELLER
Ft. Pierce, FL

SHOULD THEY STAY . . . ?

TAMAR JACOBY employs some very handy straw men to make the unpopular case for an immigration policy that would essentially create open borders ("Bordering on a Policy," Aug. 15). Regarding the estimated 12 to 15 million illegal aliens currently in the United States, Jacoby gives the impression that there are only two alternatives: mass deportations or mass amnesty.

Completely left off her menu of options is elimination of those factors that draw people to this country illegally, namely the availability of jobs and access to public benefits and services.

Jacoby would also have us believe that these workers are essential to economic growth and that the only remedy to future illegal immigration is the creation of a guest-worker program that accommodates everyone who wishes to work here, as well as every employer who wants to take advantage of low-wage workers from abroad.

These workers are not essential, though; for the most part they take jobs that Americans did until very recently. Additionally, we should not institute immigration policies that would inevitably destroy what is left of this country's middle class.

Finally, Jacoby attempts to label anyone or any group that stands in the way of her open borders agenda as "anti-immigrant." Proponents of reduced immigration are no more "anti-immigrant" than advocates for health care reform are "anti-sick people."

There are still many who consider this a nation, not merely an economy, and who believe that American immigration policy must take into account the social, cultural, and economic impact of mass immigration on the nation and its citizens.

DAN STEIN
Federation for American Immigration Reform
Washington, DC

TAMAR JACOBY RESPONDS: Dan Stein may or may not be anti-immigrant—I'll leave it to readers to make their own judgments about FAIR and its rhetoric—but he is in denial, and dangerously so, about our economy's need for immigrant workers.

The demographic boom is lowering, here as in all developed countries, with baby boomers retiring, birth rates headed below replacement level, and an increasingly skilled, educated, native-born workforce. Even now, we don't have the workers we need to keep our economy growing—and the shortages are only going to get worse in the years ahead.

No wonder that among sectors that rely on unskilled labor, virtually every industry that can has moved operations abroad. What's left? Agriculture, food-processing, hospitality, construction—all businesses that cannot easily move and that depend on immigrants.

Far from threatening working Americans, as Stein suggests, foreign laborers keep these businesses here, and they keep them healthy. (Agriculture could still move, after all, and, with it, food processing.) And this, in turn, provides jobs for all manner of Americans: skilled workers in these sectors, and in retail and services in surrounding communities.

Stein's solution is to "eliminate the available jobs"! But that is not possible even if we wanted to do so. Meanwhile, it is the denial encouraged by him and people like him that leads to the lawlessness all Americans find so troubling. We as a nation pretend we do not need these workers, so we provide no legal way for them to enter the country. But the economy churns on, and the workers come anyway, endangering our security and eroding the rule of law. Wouldn't it be better to recognize reality and deal with it responsibly?

That is neither "amnesty" nor "open borders." It is simply facing up to the world as it is. Of course we are a nation as well as an economy: a strong, vibrant nation with a tradition of openness, and more than capable, today as in the past, of absorbing newcomers who will only make us stronger.

THERE'S NO 'I' IN . . .

IN "Excelsior, You Fathead!" (Aug. 29), Richard Orodenker cited "Vic and Sadie" as one of radioman Jean Shepherd's favorite childhood radio programs. The program was actually titled "Vic and Sade."

• • •

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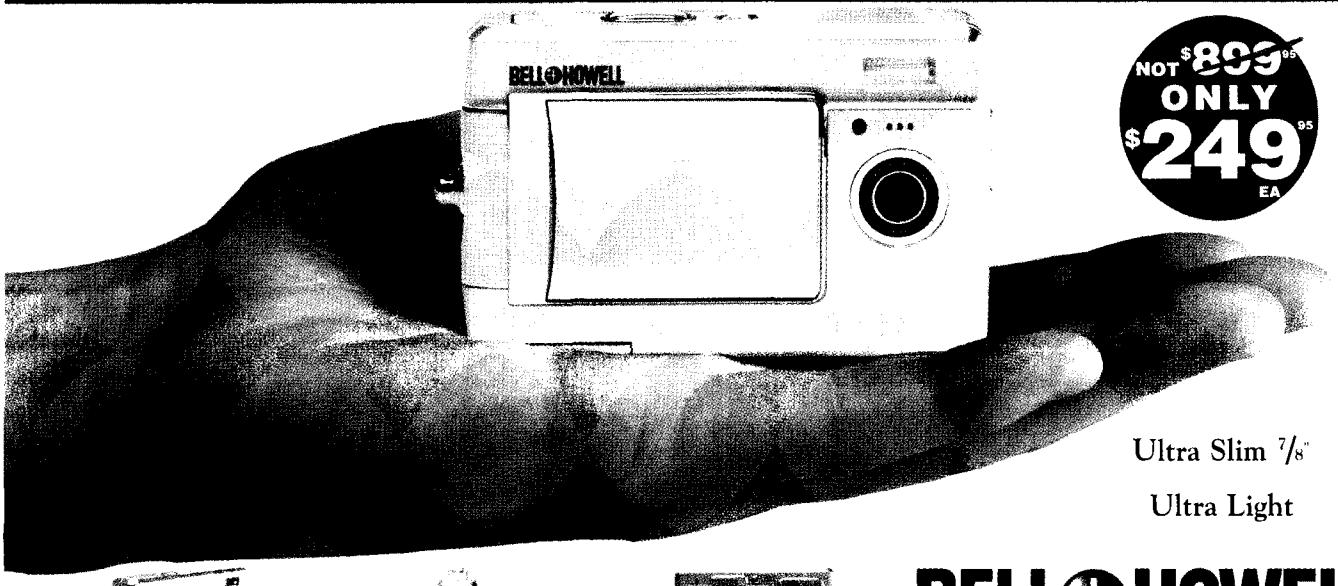

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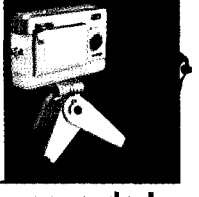

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the weekly Standard

Chief Justice Roberts

On the final day of the Roberts hearings, Sen. Richard J. Durbin of Illinois tried one last time: "If you've made one point many times over . . . the course of the last three days," he told the judge, "it is that as a judge you will be loyal and faithful to the process of law, to the rule of law." But "beyond loyalty to the process of law," he asked Roberts, "how do you view [the] law when it comes to expanding our personal freedom? . . . That's what I've been asking."

And so, in various ways, had Durbin's Democratic colleagues been asking about such matters—ones "beyond loyalty" to the rule of law. In response to Durbin, Roberts stuck to the point he had indeed made "many times over." Reframing the senator's question so as to reach the core issue, Roberts said, "Somebody asked me, you know, 'Are you going to be on the side of the little guy?' And you obviously want to give an immediate answer. But as you reflect on it, if the Constitution says that the little guy should win, the little guy is going to win in court before me. But if the Constitution says that the big guy should win, well, then the big guy is going to win, because my obligation is to the Constitution. That's the oath. The oath that a judge takes is not that 'I'll look out for particular interests.' . . . The oath is to uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States, and that's what I would do."

That exchange crystallized the fundamental difference between John Roberts and the eight Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Democrats believe a good judge will move "beyond loyalty" to the rule of law, if necessary, and seek to advance certain political outcomes—in Durbin's question, the expansion of personal freedom. Roberts dissents: He believes a good judge will distinguish between law and politics and stick resolutely to the law, regardless of the result. Roberts will go not with the little guy because he is the little guy, or the big guy because he is the big guy, but with the guy the Constitution says should win. He'll not look out for "particular interests" because his oath obligates him to support not this or that interest but the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

As for just how Roberts will go about interpreting the law—and thus carrying out his oath—his testimony last week confirmed his earlier observation that he does not have "an overarching judicial philosophy." Roberts finds merit in textualist and originalist methodologies but does not hold to them exclusively. For example, he (unlike Justice Antonin Scalia) may sometimes find it necessary to consult legislative history in interpreting a statute of Congress. He also believes that certain broadly worded provisions in the Constitution—such as the due process clauses—effectively call on judges to declare their meaning. On the issue that sunk the Robert Bork nomination, Roberts holds that the Constitution encompasses "a right of privacy," even though it is not spelled out in the text. During the hearings, not incidentally, Roberts denied that the right of privacy was "a *general* right of privacy" and declined to say whether that right, first recognized in 1965 in the *Griswold* case, includes the abortion right constitutionalized eight years later in *Roe* v. *Wade*. Roberts's testimony also suggests he has a high regard for *stare decisis* and may well be reluctant to overrule a precedent he concludes was wrongly decided.

There is unease among some conservatives as to how Chief Justice Roberts will turn out. Yet it must be said that Roberts has made emphatically clear his view that a judge must be restrained by the law—the rules, principles, customs, practices, and understandings that define it—and must not allow the law to be infused with the judge's own political views and personal values. In other words, the distinction between law and politics that the Judiciary Democrats do not respect lies at the heart of Roberts's approach to judging.

This helps explain why Roberts refused last week to state his personal views, notwithstanding that previous nominees for the High Court, having stipulated that they weren't talking about legal matters but their own views, have done precisely that. To preserve the integrity of the judicial process—to ensure to all, as he put it in his opening (and unscripted) statement, that "I have no [political] platform"—Roberts wanted to give no clue as to his own beliefs. "Just talk to me as a father," Joe Biden asked him,

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wanting to know how Roberts might think about end-of-life decisions and whether government should be involved in them. "Just tell me, just philosophically, what do you think?" Roberts answered, "I'm not going to consider issues like that in the context as a father or a husband or anything else." Only as a judge would he do so. Likewise with Dianne Feinstein, expressing her hope "to see your feelings as a man" (what else might he be?) on the same topic, Roberts declined.

Roberts took care on numerous occasions to emphasize the importance of the distinction between law and politics as it relates to judging. For example, in response to Lindsey Graham's question about what the judge regarded as the biggest threats to the rule of law today, Roberts identified only one threat—the "tendency on behalf of some judges to take . . . [their] authority and extend it into areas where they're going beyond the interpretation of the Constitution, where they're making the law"—the province of elected officials. He observed: "Judges have to recognize that their role is a limited one. That is the basis of their legitimacy. I've said it before and I'll just repeat myself: The Framers were not the sort of people, having fought a revolution to get the right of self-government, to sit down and say, 'Let's take all the difficult issues before us and let's have the judges decide them.' That would have been the farthest thing from their mind."

The failure of the Judiciary Democrats to applaud comments like these, their evident desire to have justices and judges who go beyond any loyalty to the rule of law to advance "progressive" visions, demonstrates how far their party has traveled since the middle of the past century, when Justices Robert Jackson and Felix Frankfurter still sat on the Court. Jackson (whom Roberts admires, by the way) and Frankfurter sought to preserve the judiciary "in its established but limited place in American politics," wrote Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. in 1947. But Hugo Black and William O. Douglas aimed to settle particular cases, Schlesinger said, "in accordance with their own social preconceptions"—such that, as a Yale law professor of that era said, "the less favored in life [would] be the more favored in law." By the end of the Warren Court, political judging had become the norm for most Democrats. So it has been ever since, and so it is today that a nominee committed to judicial restraint like Roberts received the reception he did from the law firm of Leahy, Kennedy, Feinstein, Biden, Schumer, Feingold, and Durbin.

The good news is that the Democratic party is in the minority in the Senate and that party leaders know how politically unwise it would be to filibuster such a demonstrably well-qualified nominee. John Roberts will soon be chief justice of the United States.

—Terry Eastland, for the Editors

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Katrina Conservatism

There's something for everyone in Bush's reconstruction plan. BY IRWIN M. STELZER

KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO, Louisiana's lachrymose governor, wants hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money so that she can "recreate our communities." You know, the community that appalled the rest of America when wall-to-wall television coverage of Katrina showed us just what it looked like: poor, black, with astonishingly high unemployment and welfare dependency rates. Her desire to recreate that community is understandable; it is the community that put her and the gum-chewing, profanity-spouting New Orleans mayor, Ray Nagin, in power.

President Bush has a grander yet far more sensible vision. Not exactly the construction of a Ronald Reagan-style shining city on a hill, an impossibility since most of New Orleans sits several feet below sea level. But a city that will be built "higher and better."

Following the advice of his other hero, Winston Churchill, Bush sought to recover some of his lost popularity last week by reacquainting Americans with his, and their, natural optimism. "A pessimist," the great Briton said, "sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." And the president has always been at his best when relying on his can-do, Texas-size optimism.

What Bush did in his nationally televised talk from New Orleans was to satisfy both the compassionate and the conservative. The compassionate will applaud his plans to provide immediate help—food, clothing, medicines, mobile homes, and other essentials—to the 500,000 displaced and stricken, some of it channeled through churches, the Salvation Army, and other private charitable organizations. That is what most Americans expect their government and the private sector to do, and what the president, who is not noted for his devotion to federal parsimony, is calling on Congress to do. The Democrats will complain, and will call for bureaucratic controls on spending, but are unlikely suddenly to become devotees of limited government. They will appropriate the relief funds the president wants so that the displaced can make it through this difficult transition period, a situation not of their own making, and not a time to hold them responsible for the local and state governments they have created and tolerated for too long.

That's the easy part. The harder part is reconstruction. A powerful economic case can be made for the proposition that the new New Orleans should be built as a much reduced city, one that caters to tourists in the manner of Venice and Key West, and becomes a specialized center for energy, transportation of agricultural and other products, and an above-sea-level residential sector for those who service the energy and transport industries. After all, well before Katrina hit, New Orleans was losing population, had a high commercial property vacancy rate, and was hardly in rude economic health.

Fortunately perhaps, economists advise on policy but are not allowed to make policy, or they would face the same political firestorm as Speaker Dennis Hastert did when he suggested that it might be prudent not to spend billions on a city that even under the best of circumstances will remain vulnerable to natural disasters. Economists can tell us what proposals will cost, but not whether the social advantages of those expenditures outweigh those costs. For that we depend on the political leadership of what the president describes as this "great and generous nation." In George W. Bush's view, which is probably the majority view, "There is no way to imagine America without New Orleans."

In his brief address to the nation, in part mea culpa, in part reassurance that steps will be taken to prepare better for future disasters, the president sought to combine a massive spending program with methods of spending consistent with his conservative principles. Or at least with two of them.

The first is that a Gulf Opportunity Zone must be created to give private sector entrepreneurs incentives, including tax abatements, to "lead the economic revival"—to start new businesses, create jobs, and build homes on unused federal lands.

The second is to rely on state and local governments, a conservative principle that will be tested against the reality of the historic and ongoing corruption and ineptitude of those governments. To rely on this "close partnership" to rebuild New Orleans and other afflicted areas in what the president called a "sensible" way is to ignore the inability of New York's city and state politicians over these past four years to agree on the reconstruction of the downtown area on which the World Trade Center's twin towers once stood. We will have to see just how the White House and Congress treat Mayor Nagin's demand that not a single penny be spent without his approval.

After that, it was all the way with LBJ. The president is not to be satisfied with the mere reconstruction of New Orleans and parts of Mississippi and Alabama. He aims at nothing less

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

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Zuma Press / M. Kane

Colorado National Guardsmen help with the clean-up in St. Bernard's Parish.

than "bold action" to eliminate "deep, persistent poverty." Grants of $5,000 for job training and child care during job searches—never mind that current job training programs administered by the government are not models of successful intervention, or that many of the persistently poor of New Orleans had abandoned such searches long before Katrina uprooted them from their homes. And there is to be a massive public works program, on a scale of which Franklin D. Roosevelt would be proud, to rebuild the region's infrastructure and provide jobs not for the best qualified, but for those who were driven from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and might want to return to it.

Which raises a real question: How many of the evacuees want to return? And would their interests be better served if the incentives they are to receive help them to improve their lives, whether they decide that can be accomplished in New Orleans, or Houston, or even Salt Lake City, as some have already decided. Texas has seen an average of about 12,000 jobs created per month so far this year. The U.S. economy has added some 200,000 jobs per month in the past year, creating far greater opportunities outside of New Orleans than exist in that city. To encourage all of the evacuees to return to a city that could not provide jobs even before Katrina hit might not be an optimal policy.

Then there is the cost, a subject that the president did not address except in the broadest terms. Money spent on creating a "better and stronger" New Orleans will not be available for bridges in Alaska, or adequately armored vehicles in Iraq, or prescription drugs for the unpoor elderly, or tax cuts. This was not the speech in which to dwell on such details, so we can only hope that a choice-averse president and a spendthrift Congress will reverse the current policy of more of everything, and instead make some hard choices.

Still, those who have faith in the private sector can take heart. We can be thankful that Bugsy Siegel did not ask niggling economists whether a stretch of desert could be converted into the thriving city that is modern-day Las Vegas. And we should be thankful that real estate developers are already looking for cheap land, changes in zoning regulations, and tax relief in New Orleans. Or so I am told by White House officials. Now, if the government doesn't tie them up in red tape, and commission multi-year studies to decide whether portions of what was New Orleans should be turned into wetlands, as some environmentalists are already proposing, the president just might succeed in what he terms "one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen." Just might. ♦

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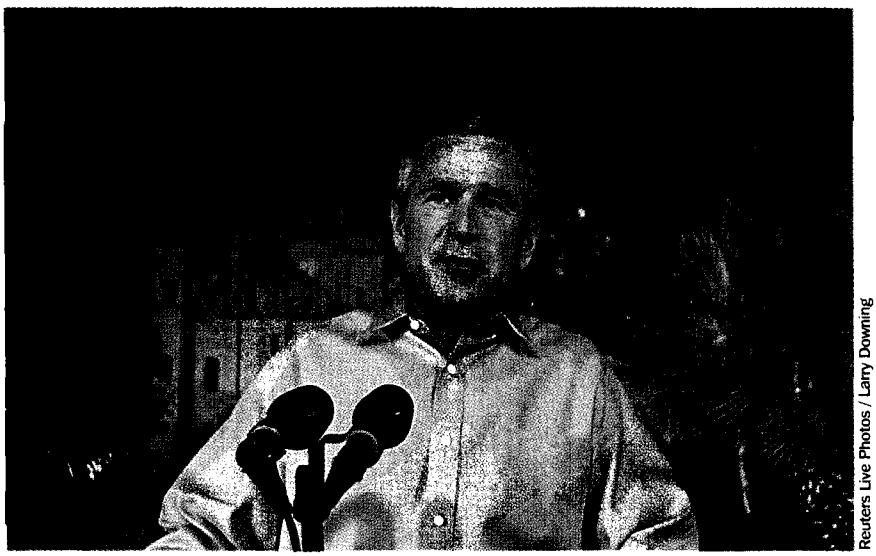
Second-Term Blues

Can Bush reconstruct his political fortunes?

BY FRED BARNES



Reuters Live Photos / Larry Downing

PRESIDENT BUSH, like no president in modern times, has guarded himself against a second-term slump. His most competent aides—the first team—stayed on at the White House. He has a sweeping agenda to keep staff busy and out of trouble. He has a majority in both houses of Congress. The economy, thanks to fresh tax cuts, is booming. Besides all that, Bush has always been lucky in politics.

But with Katrina, his luck betrayed him. There's little defense against a natural disaster that ranks among the worst in American history. Nor is the timing of such an event predictable (Bush and most of his top aides were on vacation). The president's partners in responding to the disaster were a panicky mayor of New Orleans and a do-nothing Louisiana governor. And even if the president had been inclined to deploy federal troops immediately, federal law discouraged him from doing that. So he didn't.

It's the turn in the president's luck and his difficulty in coping with it that has rattled both Bush and his aides. Obviously he can't dismiss his slow response to the hurricane as attributable merely to bad luck. The public wouldn't accept that from a president who prides himself on strong leadership in a crisis. Laying the blame where much of it belongs—on Louisiana officials—would be an act of political pettiness. Americans expect a lot from their presidents, especially when big things happen. Bush couldn't erase those expectations even if he tried. Wisely, he hasn't tried. But the situation has left him a bit flustered.

Two days before his first national address last week on the disaster—and to the surprise of his aides—the president gave an impromptu preview of his speech. The setting was a brief session with reporters as he welcomed Iraqi president Jalal Talabani to the White House. Bush was asked if Americans should be concerned that after Katrina the country isn't ready to deal with another disaster or terrorist attack. The president's response was basically yes.

"Katrina exposed serious problems in our response capability at all levels of government," he said. "And to the extent that the federal government didn't fully do its job right, I take responsibility." The press reveled in this answer, saying it came from a president who never admits mistakes.

The idea of accepting responsibility was on Bush's mind since he had already decided to include it in his speech to the nation from New Orleans two days later. And despite the premature comment, he left it in the speech. "Four years after the frightening experience of September 11th, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency," he said. "When the federal government fails to meet such an obligation, I as president am responsible for the problem, and for the solution."

Indeed, he is. While Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco continues to blame the Bush administration for her own failures, the president has fully taken command. He would have liked to give his major speech a week earlier. In fact, he seriously considered it. But he didn't "have his ducks in a row," a Bush adviser said. There hadn't been enough progress in immediate relief efforts on the Gulf Coast and his recovery plan hadn't been pulled together.

In the meantime, Bush has indulged in micromanagement, something he normally eschews. In briefings and discussions, he has delved into specifics. Having visited the disaster zone four times and talked extensively to officials on the ground, Bush has focused on making sure that what he's told in Washington reflects what's actually going on in Louisiana and Mississippi. This is partly a reaction to his feeling that he didn't get an accurate picture of what was happening in New Orleans in the days just after Katrina.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. *His book on President Bush,* Rebel-in-Chief, *will be published in January by Crown Forum.*

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The recovery program Bush announced in his speech is characteristic of his brand of conservatism. It isn't small government conservatism: Washington has a huge role and the cost will be stupendous. But the federal government's job, in Bush's scheme, would be mostly as a catalyst and an example-setter. Of course his "worker recovery accounts" would be a handout to the hurricane victims. The $5,000 per person stipend is higher than initially planned by the administration. Bush himself insisted it be boosted from a lower figure.

The president's proposal would create a Gulf enterprise zone, slashing taxes and waiving regulations to make the area attractive to entrepreneurs. His emphasis on entrepreneurs may sound like Republican boilerplate, but Bush believes it. "It is entrepreneurship that creates jobs and opportunities. It is entrepreneurship that helps break the cycle of poverty, and we will take the side of entrepreneurs as they lead the economic revival of the Gulf region."

Democrats might want to turn the region into one gigantic public housing project, but Bush doesn't. He wants to promote home ownership, a key component of his vision of an "ownership society." Bush wants to open unused federal property to housing. Federal land would be given, through a lottery, to poor people for free. "In return," he said, "they would pledge to build on the lot, with either a mortgage or help from a charitable organization." Republicans, including those appalled at how much Bush wants to spend, will like this idea.

For political salvation, Bush needs more than a big plan. He needs his luck to return. Fortunately for him, the worst predictions of post-Katrina horrors aren't coming true. Instead of 10,000 dead in New Orleans, it's likely to be fewer than 1,000. Rather than pipelines and refineries out of commission for months, they're coming back on line in a matter of days. With luck, the recovery plan will get off the ground quickly, despite Democratic opposition and Republican qualms. And if it does, Bush's personal political recovery will be close behind. ♦

Wahhabi Prison Fellowship

The teaching of jihad in American penitentiaries.

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

On August 31, four men were charged with participation in a terrorist plot hatched in a California prison. The six-count indictment describes a conspiracy to attack military and Jewish targets in the Los Angeles area, including military bases and recruitment centers, synagogues, the Israeli Consulate, and El Al airline facilities. It also spotlights a problem that has surfaced repeatedly since 9/11: that of jihadist indoctrination in prisons and jails.

The roots of this latest alleged conspiracy reach back to 1997, when Kevin James, an inmate at California State Prison, Sacramento, founded Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS), an organization promoting his radical interpretation of Islam. James required members to take an oath of obedience to him and swear not to disclose the existence of JIS. According to the indictment, James "preached the duty of JIS members to target for violent attack any enemies of Islam or 'infidels,' including the United States Government and Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel." James's teaching apparently found sympathetic ears. The plot was uncovered after former CSP-Sacramento inmate Levar Washington was arrested this July for a string of gas station robberies, and a search of his apartment turned up extremist literature and documents listing the addresses of intended terrorist targets.

While some Muslim advocacy groups deny that extremist indoctrination is occurring in prisons, the evidence continues to mount. Muktar Said Ibrahim, arrested in the attempted bombing of London's Underground on July 21, reportedly converted to Islam while incarcerated, as did attempted shoe bomber Richard Reid before him. And students of the case of former gang member Jose Padilla, accused of being part of a "dirty bomb" plot, consider relevant the time he spent behind bars just before his conversion.

Beyond these individual cases, moreover, it is a fact that radical propaganda has been distributed in U.S. prisons. Before it was shut down by the Saudi Arabian government in 2004, the Wahhabist Al Haramain Islamic Foundation distributed large numbers of extremist books worldwide, including to American prisons. Al-Haramain boasted offices in over 50 countries and received between $45 and $50 million in donations every year.

When law-enforcement agents raided the U.S. branch of Al Haramain, headquartered in Ashland, Oregon, in February 2004 as part of a money-laundering investigation, they seized copies of the literature the foundation had been distributing. They also made a remarkable find on one of the seized computers: a database that detailed where the group had sent its literature. It contained over 15,000 names. While not all recipients were prisoners, enough were that "Prisoner Number" and "Release Date" were standard fields in the database. The charity also regularly mailed bulk quantities of literature to prison chaplains, who distributed the books to inmates.

Some of the texts that Al Haramain had distributed to prisons deserve a closer look. Take Muhammad bin

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is a counterterrorism consultant and attorney.

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Jamil Zino's *Islamic Guidelines for Individual and Social Reform*, which was sent to an estimated 1,000 prisoners (an exact tally has not been made public). One of the book's themes is jihad. As early as page two, Zino states that Islam "commends the *Halal* [lawful] money in possession of a pious person who pays a share of it in charity and for *Jihad* (fighting in the way of Allah)." While some students of Islam argue that the term jihad is often misunderstood because it has nonmilitary meanings, Al Haramain's literature avoids any ambiguity: Zino forthrightly states that the term means fighting.

This advocacy of jihad is reinforced by repetition. Zino instructs his readers that children should be indoctrinated in the glories of jihad from an early age:

> Teach your children the love of justice and revenge from the unjust like the Jews and the tyrants. Consequently our youth would know that Palestine should be freed and Jerusalem must be of the Muslims. They have to learn about Islam and *Jihad* as per the Qur'an and that the holy fighting for justice is supported by Allah the Almighty.

And he further specifies the objects and means of jihad: "The *Jihad* against the disbelievers, communists and the aggressors from Jewish-Christian nations can be either by spending on *Jihad* or by participating in it in person."

Indeed, the "Jewish-Christian nations" are special objects of ire throughout the literature that Al Haramain distributed to prisons. Virulent anti-Semitism and hatred of non-Muslim governments are recurring themes.

On a page headed "Act upon these *Ahadith*," the hadith being sayings and traditions attributed to Muhammad, Zino's very first injunction reads: "The Last Hour will not appear unless the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them." Zino also imputes conspiracies to the Jews. In a passage denouncing fortunetellers, he writes, "If they know the Unseen, let them talk about the secret schemes of the Jews so that we combat them."

More sweepingly, Zino denounces "belief in man-made destructive ideologies such as atheistic communism, Jewish masonry, Marxian socialism, secularism or nationalism" as nullifying an individual's adherence to Islam. This is in keeping with the views of another of the writers whose works Al Haramain reportedly sent to prisons:

Act upon these Ahadith 167

Act upon these *Ahadith*

١ - «لا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتى يُقاتِلَ المُسْلِمُون اليَهُودَ، فَيَقْتُلُهُمُ المُسْلِمُون»

1. "The Last Hour will not appear unless the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them". (Muslim).

٢ - «مَنْ قَاتَلَ لِتَكُونَ كلمةُ الله هِيَ العُلْيا ، فَهُوَ فِي سبيلِ اللهِ»

2. "Who fights to uphold the Word of Allâh is the one who really fights in the cause of Allâh". (Bukhâri).

٣ - «مَنْ أرضَى النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللهِ وَكَلَهُ الله إلَى النَّاسِ»

3. "Whoever seeks the pleasure of people and not of Allâh, Allâh will leave him to the people." (Tirmidhi).

٤ - «مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يدْعُو مِن دُونِ الله نِدًّا دَخَلَ النَّار»

4. "Who dies while associating a partner with Allâh will enter Hell." (Bukhâri).

٥ - «مَنْ كَتَمَ عِلْماً أَلجَمَهُ اللهُ بِلِجَامٍ مِنْ نَارٍ»

5. "Whoever conceals knowledge, Allâh will put a bridle of fire on him (on the Day of Reckoning)." (Ahmad).

٦ - «من لعب بالنَّرْدَشِيرِ فَكَأَنَّمَا غَمَسَ يدَه في لَحْمِ الخِنْزِيرِ ودَمِهِ»

6. "Whoever plays dice is like the one who dipped his band in the flesh and blood of a swine." (Muslim).

٧ - «بدأ الإسلامُ غَرِيباً وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيباً كما بدأ فطُوبى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ»

7. "Islam appeared as a stranger, and it will return as a stranger. Then blessed are the strangers!" (Muslim).

A page from Jamil Zino's "Islamic Guidelines"

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips. In *The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)*, Philips excoriates the acceptance of non-Islamic rule in place of sharia law in Muslim lands. Philips describes acquiescence to non-Islamic rule as an act of idolatry and disbelief. "Un-Islamic government," he writes, "must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God."

The Koran, of course, was widely distributed by Al Haramain—the Koran, that is, in its Wahhabi version. As Stephen Schwartz reported here a year ago, the Wahhabi translation of the Koran is suffused with contempt for non-Muslims, particularly Jews and Christians. It contains numerous interpolations not present in the Arabic, all pushing the meaning in a radical direction. Al-Haramain distributed this volume to an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 prisoners.

The Wahhabi Koran also contains explanatory material rife with calls to holy war. An early footnote, for example, states:

> *Al-Jihad* (holy fighting) in Allah's Cause (with full force of numbers and weaponry) is given the utmost importance in Islam and is one of its pillars (on which it stands). By *Jihad* Islam is established, Allah's Word is made superior, . . . and His Religion (Islam) is propagated. By abandoning *Jihad* (may Allah protect us from that) Islam is destroyed and the Muslims fall into an inferior position; their honour is lost, their lands are stolen, their rule and authority vanish. *Jihad* is an obligatory duty in Islam on every Muslim, and he who tries to escape from this duty, or does not in his innermost heart wish to fulfil this duty, dies with one of the qualities of a hypocrite.

This rules out nonmilitary interpretations of jihad, insisting on "full force of numbers and weaponry." It also endorses jihad as a means of propagating Islam, and specifies that it is required of "every Muslim."

Most chilling of all is a 22-page appendix by Saudi Arabia's former chief justice Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Humaid found in the vast majority of the Korans that Al Haramain sent to the prisons. Entitled "The Call to *Jihad* (Holy Fighting in Allah's Cause) in the Qur'an," this essay is an exhortation to violence.

Bin Humaid argues at length that Muslims are obligated to wage war against non-Muslims who have not submitted to Islamic rule. He explains,

> Allah . . . commanded the Muslims to fight against all the *Mushrikun* as well as against the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) if they do not embrace Islam, till they pay the *Jizyah* (a tax levied on the non-Muslims who do not embrace

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> Islam and are under the protection of an Islamic government) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.

Mushrikun refers to all nonbelievers who are not classified as people of the scriptures; bin Humaid thus advocates war with the entire non-Muslim world.

Once again, the essay appeals to the reader to volunteer for jihad:

> *Jihad* is a great deed indeed and there is no deed whose reward or blessing is as that of it, and for this reason, it is the best thing that one can volunteer for. . . . [I]t (*Jihad*) shows one's patience, one's devotion to Islam, one's remembrance to Allah and there are other kinds of good deeds which are present in *Jihad* and are not present in any other act of worship.

There is reason to believe that the literature distributed by the Al Haramain Foundation is only the tip of the iceberg of what has reached and may still be reaching U.S. prisons. For all its impressive international presence, Al Haramain had only a handful of employees at its U.S. branch, and was just one of a number of Wahhabi charities with U.S. prison-outreach programs. The focus here is on Al Haramain's literature purely because the February 2004 raid opened a window into its program of prisoner education.

More study of radical indoctrination in prisons is warranted. Earlier this year, Freedom House, the New York-based human rights organization, released a scrupulously documented report exposing the extremist contents of literature found in the libraries, publication racks, and bookstores of 15 prominent U.S. mosques. The report is entitled "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques."

A similar sampling of the Islamic literature available in federal and state prisons—both in libraries and distributed by prison chaplains—is needed to further our understanding of whatever extremist indoctrination has occurred and is occurring. A good place to start is the California prison system, where the latest plot for jihad on our soil was apparently hatched. ♦

The Failure of Containment

U.S.-European Iran policy reaches a dead end.

BY AMIR TAHERI

THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is scheduled this week to decide whether to refer Iran to the United Nations' Security Council for alleged violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Iran is making a last-minute effort to stall the decision, but it is already clear that the European strategy—carried out by Britain, France, and Germany—for dealing with Iran's clandestine quest for nuclear weapons has failed.

The trio of E.U. nations had based their policy on three assumptions. The first was that Tehran was playing the nuclear issue merely for short-term political gains, to attract attention and win "respect." But we now know that the decision to develop nuclear weapons' "surge capacity" was made at least a decade ago as part of a new National Defense Doctrine, which has been described by "The Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei as "sacrosanct."

The second assumption was that last June's presidential election would sweep Hashemi Rafsanjani, a wheeler-dealer mullah with business connections in all three European countries, to power. As president, Rafsanjani was supposed to abandon Iran's nuclear project in exchange for "an honorable place" at the global high table plus business deals for his clan. Things, however, went differently. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who did win the presidency, has nothing but contempt for Britain, France, and Germany. One of Ahmadinejad's advisers, a certain Muhammad-Javad Larijani, has described the trio as "among the most savage nations on earth."

Amir Taheri is the former editor in chief of the Iranian newspaper Kayhan.

The third assumption of the European trio was that the Islamic Republic would tremble at the prospect of referral to the Security Council. This, too, has proved false. Far from fearing the prospect, the new leadership appears determined to bring it about. "We have no fear of the Security Council," says Hussein Shariatmadari, one of Ahmadinejad's ideological mentors. "If the IAEA does not abandon its accusations we may take the issue to the Security Council ourselves."

This is not braggadocio. Tehran claims it already has Russian and Chinese assurances that any "anti-Iran" resolution would be vetoed.

This is all very embarrassing, to say the least. The Europeans have no clue as to what they might do if the issue goes to the council and comes to nothing because of a lack of consensus. Would they go for unilateral sanctions against Iran? Would they take military action?

The Bush administration, for its part, is in an equally embarrassing position. Having subcontracted its Iran policy to the trio, it is now bereft of that fig leaf.

Europe and Washington appear to be downplaying the whole situation, presenting supposedly new research, along with a series of conspicuous leaks, to convince public opinion that the Iranian nuclear threat isn't so urgent after all. One National Intelligence Estimate report, leaked last month, claimed that Iran was 6 to 10 years away from making an atomic

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bomb. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, a British think tank, which echoed that claim last week, was quickly followed by French experts making similar claims in Paris newspapers.

None of this, however, addresses the distinct possibility that the entire nuclear issue has been nothing but a distraction from Iran's fundamental hostility to the West. The "medium and long-term program" that President Ahmadinejad presented to the Islamic Majlis (parliament) last month is based on the stark assertion that the world is heading for a "clash of civilizations," part of which will be fought between the United States and Iran in the Middle East.

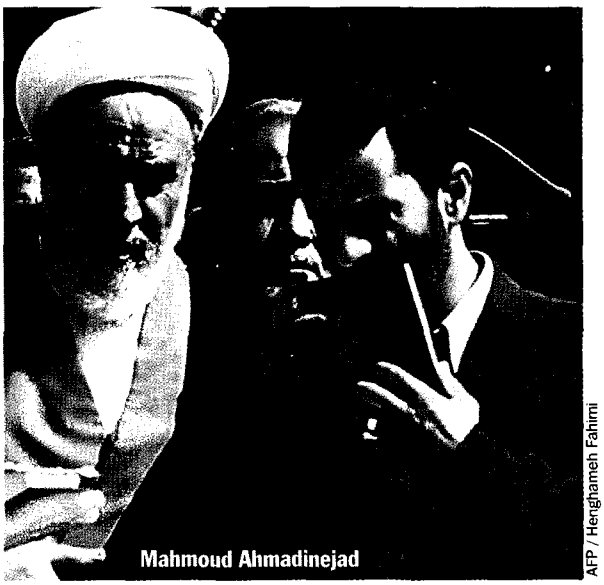
The 6,000-word document describes the United States as a "sunset" (*ofuli*) power and presents Iran as a "sunrise" (*tolu'ee*) power. It claims that Iran is "the core power" of Islam and certain to win the duel against a United States "in its last throes." The 6,000-word document also declares, "Leadership is the indisputable right of the Iranian nation."

While part of this can be written off as hyperbole, there is no doubt that the new leadership in Tehran is already engaged in a low-intensity war against the United States as it sends terrorists across the border into Iraq. Tehran is prepared to keep up the drumbeat of arms and terrorists until the end of George W. Bush's presidency. The new leadership sees Bush as an aberration and is convinced that whoever succeeds him will revert to the traditional American policy of "waving a big stick and running away."

With something like $200 million pouring into its coffers every day as a result of rising oil prices, the Islamic Republic has embarked on a major military buildup, especially close to the border with Iraq, which has been put under the control of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Ahmadinejad has also promised "substantial increases" in the nation's military budget and the controversial nuclear project.

By overthrowing the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Baath in Iraq, the United States has destroyed the two most determined foes of the Islamic Republic. By driving Syria out of Lebanon, the United States has left Iran as the sole major regional influence in Beirut. Even the weakening of traditional Arab despotic regimes has helped the Islamic Republic, which is busy reviving its networks in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and even Egypt and North Africa. The Iranian message is simple: "The Americans will run away, but we shall always be there!" That message is finding increasing resonance, even among the new leaderships in Kabul and Baghdad.


Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

AFP / Hengameh Fahimi

"The tide is turning in our favor," says Shariatmadari. "Even Katrina is working for us!"

Tehran's new cockiness is largely due to the Bush administration's failure to develop a coherent Iran policy. This has conceded to Iran the initiative, while the United States is playing catch-up and damage control, especially in Iraq.

Washington has three options. First, it can try to engage Iran in the hope of changing aspects of its behavior in exchange for diplomatic and security concessions. This would be a new version of the "grand bargain" that President Bill Clinton tried to sell to the mullahs in 1999. Clinton's attempt failed because the Tehran leadership at the time was too divided. Such a bargain has a better chance this time if only because the Iranian side now speaks with one voice. But it would mean sacrificing prospects of democratization in Iran in the name of short-term considerations of realpolitik.

The second option is to accept a mini-version of the Cold War, this time with Iran as the chief adversary. This mini-Cold War could last decades and, like the big one fought against the USSR, would almost certainly include low-intensity wars fought through proxies in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Caspian Basin, the Persian Gulf, and Israel-Palestine. The Islamic Republic will lose in the end, just as the USSR did. But the cost of achieving victory over years, if not decades, could be enormous, especially for the United States' regional allies including Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The third option is a policy of regime change. This need not mean military invasion as in Afghanistan and Iraq, although the use of force should never be ruled out. The Islamic Republic is a fragile structure in no position to play a costly power game at the high table. Its leadership has lost the confidence of perhaps a majority of Iranians, while the factional feuds of the past could return to plague it at any moment. More important, Iran has a strong domestic potential for a grassroots democracy movement that could challenge the bellicose vision of the present leadership. Such a policy may not succeed before the end of the Bush presidency. But it would have the immense merit of putting the mullahs on the defensive and might even put the fear of Mammon, if not God, in them. ♦

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Saving a Great City

Why America should rebuild New Orleans

By James R. Stoner Jr.

It is only by thinking of Walker Percy that I can begin to make sense of what has befallen the city by which I live, where my wife and our four children were born, and that I have come to call home. Percy, the celebrated author of six novels, lived in Covington, Louisiana, just north of Lake Pontchartrain, and set his stories in the orbit of New Orleans and its culture. He wrote of the confrontation of modernity and tradition, of the alienation of the individual, of redemption and apocalypse, of natural disaster and manmade plague. He died in 1990 and was buried with the monks of St. Joseph Abbey near his home.

Percy was a deeply Catholic author, but never alleged to have been a saint. To the Catholic mind, that means his soul was marked for purgatory before admittance to heaven, a place or time of penance or cleansing to prepare to see God. Catholics are bound to believe that purgatory exists, but the precise form of its labors, and the timetable for its completion, have been left to our imagination. Six novels in 30 years suggests an author who did not write quickly or easily, so let us suppose that Percy's purgatory was to write one last novel, a perfect novel about a perfect storm: a monster hurricane headed straight to New Orleans, diverted at the last moment ever so slightly east, weakened in force ever so marginally—no doubt by the prayers of the city's faithful to their Lady of Prompt Succor—but with full disaster doubling back nonetheless as a result of human incompetence, corruption, malice, and neglect. It is a classic Percean plot.

Now, Satan has no purchase on the souls in purgatory—they are destined for salvation—but maybe human error is still possible there, and if so, maybe Percy's novel, like Robert E. Lee's plans for the Battle of Antietam, fell into Satan's hands. Once an angel of light, he knew brilliance when he saw it, and immediately sent a message to God as he had done in the age of Job. "Let me put to the test these Americans," he wagered, "to see which of us they serve, you, as they never tire of professing, or me, as seems to much of the world more likely. Let me stir up the winds of the Atlantic, give them a taste of Florida to distract an unsuspecting nation, then send them right to the port that gathers the grain and coal and other fruits of the heartland, that refines my nectar, oil, and see whether your Americans will do my bidding." A colloquy followed. The Father nodded. And it was done.

James R. Stoner Jr. is a professor of political science at Louisiana State University and author, most recently, of Common-Law Liberty *(University Press of Kansas).*

II

"Much of what happened in New Orleans this week might have been avoided," Mark Fischetti wrote in the *New York Times* the Friday after Katrina struck. As a matter of civil engineering this is true, but as a matter of political reality, a serious catastrophe was bound to happen. That the sophisticated plan touted by Fischetti was called "Coast 2050" suggests that even those willing to prepare for the future barely expected to see the fruits of their efforts in their lifetimes. Of course all of that changed in 72 hours. New Orleanians are now scattered across America—both those who left of their own accord, and those sent away by bus after harrowing days in the Superdome or the Convention Center—but one can be sure that most of them will want to come home when they can. It's not a matter of reason; one lives for love in New Orleans, and to most New Orleanians that means for family and home. It's a sentiment that cuts across the many differences of class and race now made visible to the world like an open wound.

But rebuilding New Orleans is not just a dream of the romantic or a demand of those with nowhere else to go. As George Friedman argued in an article that circulated widely on the Internet in the days after the storm, it stands to reason as a matter of geopolitics that the United

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States needs to protect the port at the mouth of the major river that drains the continent. Not software for export nor much by way of consumer goods passes through the city, as they do the ports on the east and west coasts, but coal, grain, and other commodities come down the Mississippi on barges to be loaded for shipping abroad; steel arrives here for manufacturers in the United States; oil from the Gulf (ours and theirs) is refined and distributed; chemicals are produced along the river above the city, and much more. As Friedman wrote, from the time of the Louisiana Purchase "until last Sunday, New Orleans was, in many ways, the pivot of the American economy." It may not have been its growing point—indeed, part of the inertia in the city and in thinking about it came from the palpable sense that it represented the past rather than the future of American commerce—but New Orleans and the ports of Louisiana and Baton Rouge upriver together handle all the physical commodities still necessary to modern life. (When gasoline prices around the country jumped a dollar or more after the city went under, all America was reminded of that stubborn geographic fact.)

That protection of the city is possible if the political will is there can be seen both in the existing control of the river and in the example of the Dutch. As John McPhee described in his 1989 book *The Control of Nature*, flood-protection along the Mississippi River was once the responsibility of local communities, once even of individual plantations. These did their jobs with various degrees of effectiveness, but the more successful levees put added pressure on the others, for the force of gravity on water is inexorable: High water wants to flood and will find the weakest barrier. Eventually, the only viable solution was to centralize the levee system under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers. This was begun already in the late 19th century; indeed, William Graham Sumner complains of it as an example of illegitimate governmental interference in his 1883 classic, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*.

The Corps's ambition, according to McPhee, reached a sort of culmination in the building of the Old River dams and locks near the spot where the Red River empties into the Mississippi, designed to keep the great river in its present channel and out of the Atchafalaya basin, where it seems naturally to seek a shorter outlet to the Gulf, while allowing high water from the main river to be released into the basin if necessary to prevent flooding downstream. Though McPhee points to the potential for catastrophe should the dams ever fail, the levee system as a whole has tamed the lower Mississippi. The disastrous flood of 1927 in St. Bernard Parish downriver from New Orleans, memorably described in John Barry's *Rising Tide*, was caused by a deliberate breach in the levee south of New Orleans in order to relieve pressure on the levees through the city itself. (That is why, even today, when a levee is breached, those down water often assume it was deliberate.) The 1927 flood led to the building of the Bonnet Carré Spillway upriver from the city, permitting the Corps to divert high waters from the river into Lake Pontchartrain, something they have to do every decade or so. When the gates are opened, you can see the brown river water trickle into the lake from Interstate 10 west of the city. It seems so little at any moment, but last time aerial photos showed the whole lake turned brown in barely a week.

Except when the spillway is opened, Lake Pontchartrain is part of a water system that is separate from the river. Fed by slow-moving rivers of its own and by another, smaller lake to its west, Pontchartrain averages only 12 to 14 feet in depth, but is long and wide: 40 miles from east to west, 24 from north to south at its widest point. (The latter span is crossed by a causeway that connects Mandeville and Covington on the North Shore, the city's fastest growing and upscale suburbs, to Metairie, the suburb immediately to the city's west; despite its length, it has become a major commuting route.) On its eastern end, Pontchartrain opens to the Gulf of Mexico just a little way north of the mouth of the Mississippi, through the much smaller Lake Borgne. As the world now knows, not the river but the lake was the cause of the terrible flooding of New Orleans. The lake rose as the storm surged water in from the Gulf and added rains of its own, and it soon broke through a couple of levees, one on the Industrial Canal, which connects the lake and the river on the eastern side of the city, the other on the Seventeenth Street Canal on the city's western edge, into which water is pumped to drain the city into the lake.

Lake Pontchartrain is geologically very similar to the Zuider Zee in the Netherlands. Both are near the mouth of a major river draining the continent—in Holland, of course, it is the Rhine—and both are naturally fresh water or brackish. And once one does the conversions, even the dimensions are almost identical: four to five meters deep, a little shy of 100 kilometers in length, about 50 in width. Of course the natural history of the Zuider Zee is better known. Called Flevo Lake by the Romans, it was renamed in 1827, after a flood from the North Sea broke dikes and widened its mouth. Fifty thousand people are thought to have died in that flood; some 10,000 died in November 1421, when dikes broke again.

But the Zuider Zee has been tamed by human engineering. A 1918 act initiated the project after flooding two years before, and by 1932 a dam had been completed across its mouth. Some land behind the dam has been reclaimed in polders, some for dwelling, some for farming.

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What is essential is that the Zuider Zee has never flooded with waters from a North Sea storm since the project was completed, even in 1953, when a winter storm devastated Holland's then-unprotected south. The replacement of individual dikes with a uniform dam and sea wall, imagined since the 17th century, planned by Cornelis Lely as early as 1891, and finally built when he became the Dutch minister of transport and public works, effectively removed vulnerability from the Zuider Zee. A modern series of movable sea walls and dikes has since been built in the southern region, allowing continued tidal flow in fair weather but closable in foul. Modern engineering, with increasing sensitivity to the natural environment so far as is consistent with protecting human life, has restored to the "Low Countries" of Europe the kind of wealth they had known several hundred years before.

What the Dutch could do to the Zuider Zee almost a century ago, and with less disruption to their southern inlets within recent memory, Americans can surely do to the Pontchartrain today and to the other wetlands adjacent to New Orleans. To be sure, our summer hurricanes from the tropics are fiercer than their winter storms off the Arctic, but technology is comparably more advanced. The mouth of the Pontchartrain in Lake Borgne is no wider, indeed a little narrower, than that of the Zuider Zee. If the engineers think it advisable, a second dam might be built in the middle of the Pontchartrain as in the Zuider Zee; in fact, the causeway bridge already spans this route and is slated for expansion. Fully mastered, the water level in the lake could be lowered in hurricane season to compensate for the water that a hurricane would drop as rain and for the height of the waves it could stir. This would limit even the worst surge that could double back from the lake into New Orleans, prevent excessive pressure on the levees once the storm had passed—the cause of the flooding of most of the city—and even keep the city above the lake in case of a breach. And the North Shore, which is largely unleveed, would also be protected from storm surge flooding if the lake were managed, not left to nature's whim.

In short, just as control of the Mississippi took a sort of paradigm shift in thinking—from community levees protecting individual towns and plantations to a long, continuous system maintained by the Corps of Engineers—so the current pattern of individual levees protecting New Orleans and its neighbors from the lake and its canals, each with its own Levee Board staffed by patronage appointments, could be replaced by an integrated system that asserted control over the lake itself, and an analogous system to master the westbank wetlands as well, now also under several jurisdictions. It only requires a change of thinking and federal dollars—though if the estimates in the "Coast 2050" plan are correct, the cost barely exceeds the first emergency relief package passed by Congress in the aftermath of the Katrina flood and is dwarfed by the second. Not even counting the lives lost and the communities destroyed, it would be a bargain.

III

The Zuider Zee system took under 15 years to complete once the Dutch got serious; the more modern system in Holland's south took 30. Even if the plan for New Orleans devised in 1998 had been immediately enacted it would not likely have been finished in time for Katrina, and in fact the scientific analysis of the possible flooding of New Orleans by 15 feet of water from the lake had only been worked out by scientists in the late 1990s and gradually brought to the public's attention in the last few years. The bitter partisan recrimination in the days since the flooding, mostly concerning the relief effort and its various delays, is indicative of the politics that made adoption of an imaginative solution to the threat of a hurricane impossible in recent years. Indeed, as many have rushed to say, the politics of the city and the state are a tangled knot, and when blame eventually gets apportioned, there will be plenty to pass around.

Out-of-state observers are inclined to think the need for massive rebuilding (as some wit noted, one dare not call it "reconstruction") offers planners a clean slate in much of the city, and they must be relieved that the Supreme Court decided the *Kelo* case as it did, in favor of the urban planners rather than the private owners. I'm inclined to the view that it will be mostly those who love the city who come back, and they will want to restore as well as rebuild. There will be room enough for both. Leaving to others the matter of sorting out the past, let me point to areas of possible consensus concerning the city's future, first among the locals, then in the nation at large.

Since the oil business pulled out of New Orleans for Houston, company by company over the past decade or so, the city has relied ever more on tourism as its major industry—a dead-end choice for a commercial city that, as Joel Kotkin recently wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "lies not in creating its future but selling its past." The city has given in to every weak impulse and temptation, as though they were the cause of its charm. Historically, conventions came to New Orleans as a place to do business, not just a place to play, and its fabled hospitality and charm depended upon a mingling of regular customers and visitors. The world-famous restaurants were gathering places for the well-to-do of the city, not just out-of-towners with expense accounts, and the culinary culture they represented was shared by every level of society, as tourists not on expense

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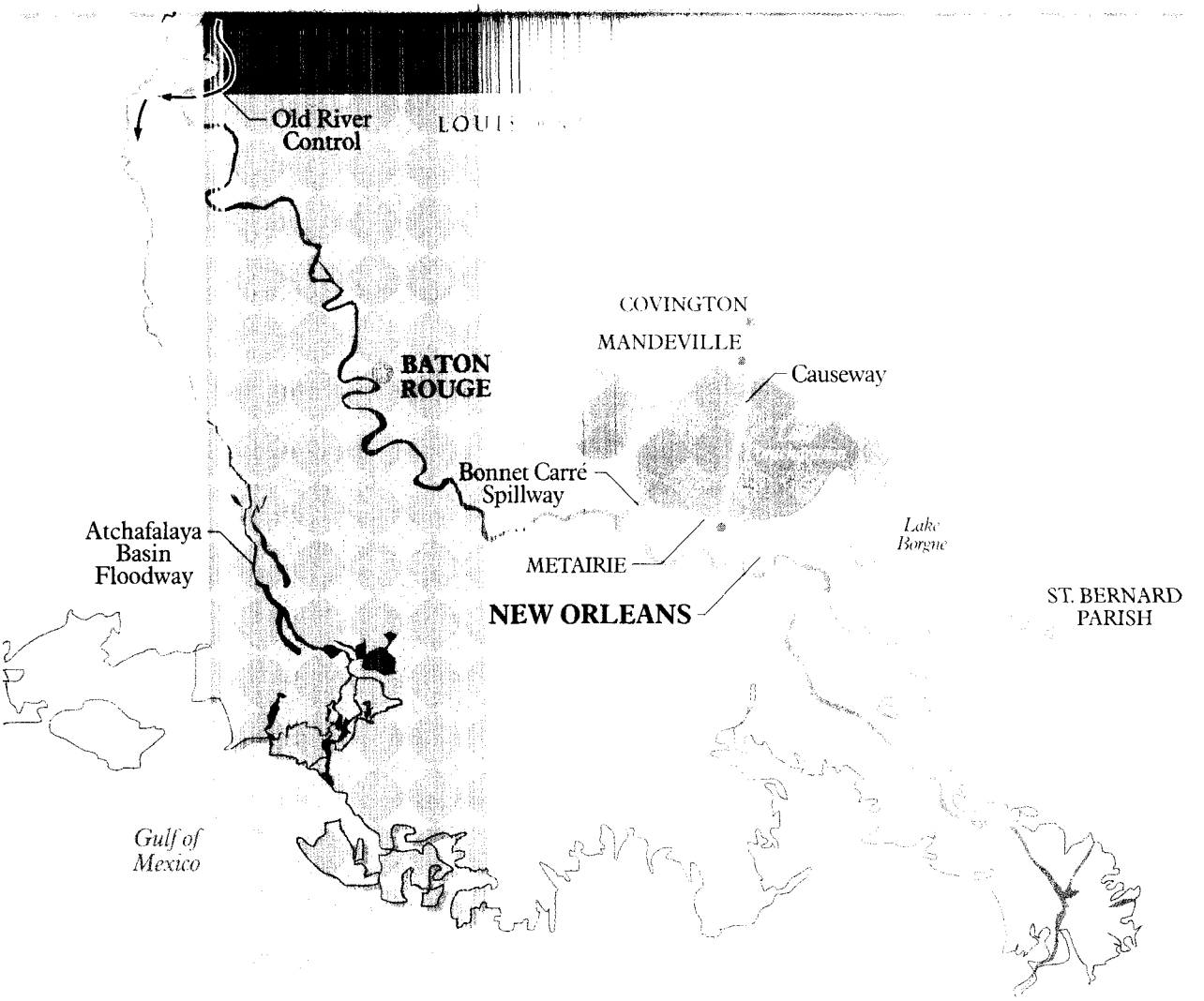

Illustration by Philip Chalk

accounts discovered to their delight. A clear commitment to master the natural threat to the city ought to send serious commerce, business, and industry the signal they need to return, and this would bring repair of the cultural infrastructure as well as the physical. Moreover, once secure, there is no reason that New Orleans should not find a niche in the growing information economy, which values personality and thrives on human interest as well as technical proficiency. The large housing projects built in the city after World War II had become such shameful dens of misery and criminality that over the past several years some of them have been partially dismantled and others entirely razed. Rebuilding such boondoggles is not the kind of federal project New Orleans needs. But a great public work that at once protects the city, assures its future existence, and brings jobs in construction ought to be public money well spent.

Race is never far from the surface of New Orleans politics—perhaps it *is* the surface of New Orleans politics—but it operates in a way very different from its depiction in the national press. Blacks have controlled the city government for a generation, and in the election last year the last two whites elected and reelected citywide moved on. The current mayor, Ray Nagin, was no big-city boss but CEO of the local cable company, Cox Communications. He ran as a reformer with the support of the city's business community—"Nagin-Reagan" was the taunt in the campaign—and he is representative of a rising class of black professionals and businesspeople in the city. The ancient rivalry of New Orleans and Atlanta—once cast as the Old South versus the New—plays itself out now in black middle-class culture. One has only to drive area highways to see that two major annual events in New Orleans—the Bayou Classic football game between Southern University and Grambling State University over Thanksgiving weekend, and the Essence Festival over the Fourth of July—draw thousands of well-off black Americans back home to New Orleans, even though Atlanta has been more successful in creating modern white-collar jobs.

Except in some of the newer suburbs, but even there to some degree, blacks and whites of every social class encounter one another in New Orleans all the time. This is never more true than at Mardi Gras, when uptown families and the people you saw on TV at the Superdome stand along the same parade route and compare the beads they catch. There is still social separation of the races—different churches (though some mixing between Catholics and evangelicals) and different carnival

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krewes—but these coexist with physical proximity. The national press still misses this, wanting to tell a story about how white houses stayed dry and black houses flooded. But Lakeview, next to the notorious breach in the Seventeenth Street Canal, is largely white, and so is flooded St. Bernard Parish, while poorer black communities interspersed among the mansions of St. Charles Avenue, over by the river, are dry. It is characteristic of New Orleans that the usual generalizations about race unravel. Many distinctive New Orleanian traits—whether tolerance of corruption on the one hand, or staunch religious faith on the other—cut across racial lines.

No one from the area was surprised by the eruption of violence when the rising waters seemed out of control. Even a week or two later, hints of the extent of the street war are only beginning to trickle out. Those who stayed and have subsequently evacuated tell of the constant sound of gunfire during the moonless nights; others reported seeing armed gangs (though I know of no pictures of such in the major media), and stories of rapes and robberies in the super-shelters abound. It quickly became politically incorrect in national circles to express concern about the looting, as though all that was going on was a few desperate people taking what they needed to survive. When and if the full story of the breakdown of order is told, it will be a harrowing tale. What it means for the future of the city—how it will affect crime in an already violent place, how it will affect race relations—is something that only the future knows. One can imagine the criminal bands broken, and one can imagine them resentful and defiant. One cannot imagine the city indifferent about crime and security for a long, long time.

The eruption of partisan rancor almost immediately on the national scene is also not surprising to those observing the tenor of politics in recent years, but it is depressing nonetheless. Most Americans pull together in times of crisis and let go of partisan differences until the danger is past, but bipartisanship in the face of disaster did not seem to be the guiding spirit of the political classes in the first week. It didn't help that prominent northern Republican politicians dropped hints that the city might not be worth saving or rebuilding, as if resentful that the statue of General Lee still stands atop a column at the head of St. Charles Avenue looking serenely yet sternly at the business district and the French Quarter, as if the old sore never quite heals. As modern Republicans readily enough admit among themselves, the party does not always seem equipped ideologically to understand the value and the delicate order of a great city, which is more inegalitarian than the moralists among them wish to admit and more dependent on the character of the community than the libertarians are able to explain. As for the demagoguery of the "angry left," ignoring that both the city and the state are in Democratic hands, it is to my mind beneath contempt.

But the outreach of America to New Orleans and to the surrounding areas of Mississippi and Alabama also affected by the storm has been heartwarming, indeed overwhelming. For all the complaints about the first response, the rescue count by boat and helicopter the first few days now looks as though it will significantly exceed the death toll. Medical teams from around the country arrived with alacrity and worked with quiet competence. The military came when ordered and seems to have gone efficiently about its work. Communities from around the nation have welcomed refugees among them in homes and shelters; schools have generously taken in our students; gifts of money and offers of help abound. Despite the ways in which New Orleanians are different, perhaps because we are different, Americans seem to have a special fondness for the city and its people that goes beyond even the usual generous spirit of a generous people. Maybe it is recognition of the city's importance in the nation's history and economy. Maybe it is the memory that no one leaves a visit to New Orleans unchanged. Maybe it is that, in an age of abstracted materialism, the city's signal trait is human warmth.

IV

The next few months will be the time of decision for the city's future. Already the local spirit is eager to rebuild, and already there has been an outpouring of relief, but the serious decisions are yet to be made: whether New Orleans will be recognized as a strategic asset worth dramatically enhanced federal flood protection, and so whether the rebuilding will be sentimental or substantial. New Orleans will never be another Houston, but it can learn from Houston, and from many another city, even as it recovers a culture that is distinctively its own.

When God gave Satan permission to test Job's faithfulness, it was with one condition: "All that he has is in your power; only the man himself you must not touch." The inundation of New Orleans has tested America and, at least at the outset, exposed more than a couple of our failings. But it has not yet drowned our spirit, not the spirit of the people of the city nor the spirit of the country that has reached out to us as fellow Americans. The taming of the forces of nature has always been a challenge we have welcomed, not a task we have disdained or abandoned. And the fruits of peaceful order and free exchange, amidst commercial plenty shared with family and friends, have never seemed to us ignoble as an end. If this is so, then New Orleans has a place in America's future, not only in her past. ♦

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Democracy in Russia

Can a rejuvenated Republican party unify the liberal opposition to Putin?

By Leon Aron

One of the most potentially significant events in Russian politics this year was the national conference of the Republican party of Russia (RPR). It witnessed what may prove to be the last credible attempt to create a democratic opposition with broad enough appeal to contest the Kremlin's control over the Duma (parliament) in 2007 and the presidency in 2008.

Largely forgotten before this year, the RPR is one of Russia's oldest liberal (in the Russian sense—right-of-center, pro-market, and reformist) parties. Founded in 1990, it failed repeatedly to gain a foothold in the Duma, and sank from view. This year, however, the party was back in the headlines, overhauling its rules, adopting a new platform, and installing new leaders.

It was clear on the morning of July 2, in the Rusotel Hotel on the outskirts of Moscow, that this renewal went beyond any mere reorganization. Rejuvenation, even exuberance, was in evidence in the auditorium where several hundred delegates from 58 of Russia's 89 provinces applauded and booed. The gathering overflowed with an energy and optimism I have not seen among Russian democrats since the revolution of the late 1980s.

Most reminiscent of those halcyon days, however, was the abandon with which the delegates criticized the government. Their indictment was remarkable both in its scope and its merciless intensity. It found vigorous expression in the documents released by the conference—an "Appeal to the Citizens of Russia" and a platform—as well as in speeches and debates, which were webcast live on the party's website.

Yes, states the platform, Russia has enjoyed remarkable growth since 1999, with both GDP and incomes rising by a third and the number of people in poverty falling by half. But this growth is due largely to high oil prices. Outside the commodity sector, expansion has been modest and slowing, with rates of increase consistently smaller than in China, India, or Brazil.

The Russian people are receiving less and less of the "oil-soaked" economic pie. According to the platform, Russia is eighty-second in the world in per capita GDP, and one-fifth of the population still lives in poverty. Corruption is pervasive. About half of the money earmarked for government programs is stolen. The Soviet-era education and health systems, housing, and utilities are threadbare, failing, and starved for funds. At the same time, the armed forces, made up of conscripts, are bloated and ineffective, and the police are crooked, incapable of protecting the public from Chechnya-based terrorism, despite infusions of billions of rubles in additional funding.

Although the particulars of this indictment are staples of the Russian press, the ferocity of the RPR's attack is singular. And so is the Republicans' explanation for these and many other ills, spelled out in Section One of the platform. Entitled "The Quagmire of Authoritarianism," it ascribes "all the systemic failures of Russia in recent years" to the Kremlin's seeking a "monopoly of power."

At the heart of the Republican party's quarrel with the regime of Vladimir Putin is the latter's assault on the democratic institutions and practices that "began to develop as a result of the democratic revolution of the 1990s." Starting with the party's motto—"Together, Toward Freedom and Dignity"—the word *svoboda*, which means both "freedom" and "liberty" in Russian, is by far the most common word in the RPR's official statements. The title of the platform is "Individual Freedom, Honest Government, and a Dignified Life for All."

Similarly, the conference's "Appeal to the Citizens of

Leon Aron is director of Russian studies at the American Enterprise Institute. This article is drawn from a longer essay, which will be published at www.aei.org *in October.*

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Russia" begins: "We are guided by the conviction that as a strong, united, and peaceful state, which competes successfully with other states, Russia can survive and develop only in freedom—political and economic freedom, intellectual and spiritual freedom."

Twenty years ago, the document continues, Russia "started down the path of freedom." It was a difficult road, and many mistakes were made. Yet so long as Russia "moved toward freedom," there was a chance of creating a just society and a dignified existence. "Today Russia is being forced off the path of freedom and thus deprived of its future. That is why we declare our principled rejection of the present political regime and its social and economic policies." Authoritarianism, with its "fear and unfreedom," can lead only to "backwardness and poverty." The regime's apparent determination to create a "bureaucratic police state" is driving Russia deeper and deeper into "shabbiness and injustice." Therefore the struggle against such a state and "for freedom and democracy" is the "key precondition for Russia's success."

The muzzling of television and increasing pressure on the print media, restrictions on demonstrations and referendums, the bureaucratic hassling of opposition and independent parties and candidates have resulted in the dramatic weakening of democratic accountability, say the Republicans. Unelected bureaucrats are again in charge. Likewise, the state's push to regain a monopoly over at least the most lucrative sectors of the economy and to constrain economic freedom are responsible for slowing economic growth. The platform scores the flimsy protection of property rights and the various forms of extortion to which private businesses are subjected by local and central authorities.

The state, which should exist to serve the people, is again becoming their master. A new, united democratic opposition party is needed to reverse this trend—a party that will "strive daily to protect the political and civil liberties of Russian citizens, and to create a modern, competitive, market economy." Of the five "priority tasks" facing Russia, says the platform, the first is "the struggle to democratize Russia" and to bring the state back under "democratic control."

It is hard to think of a more fitting leader for Russia's reconstituted Republicans than Vladimir Ryzhkov, a member of the party's collective leadership, the political council. (To dampen the battle of egos that has crippled Russia's democrats in the past, the reorganized RPR has no chairman or president.) At 39, Ryzhkov represents a new political generation. He came of age in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a "child of Gorbachev," as he calls himself. Unlike the elites born or based in Moscow or St. Petersburg—but like both Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin—Ryzhkov is a quintessential provincial Russian, a native of the Altai Territory, in southern Siberia, 1,860 miles from Moscow and about 65,000 square miles in area (slightly larger than England).

A graduate of Altai State University, he taught there and received a doctorate in history. Ryzhkov is married to a fellow historian turned lawyer and has an 11-year-old daughter.

Eighteen years old and a student when Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Ryzhkov quickly became a leader of the democracy movement in Altai. After the failed coup of August 1991, when Yeltsin appointed new regional administrators, the new governor of Altai chose the 25-year-old Ryzhkov as his first deputy. Two years later, Ryzhkov was elected to the first post-Soviet Duma from the district capital, Barnaul (population 600,000). He was reelected three times (in 1995, 1999, and 2003) by large margins. In 1997 the deputies elected him first deputy speaker of the Duma.

Although he has been in national politics for 12 years, Ryzhkov has never been implicated in any scandal—an almost unheard of distinction among top Russian public figures. (The only other exceptions that come to mind are two veteran liberals and ex-co-chairs of the Union of Rightist Forces, former acting prime minister Yegor Gaidar and former first deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov. To judge for themselves, Russian speakers may consult *www.compromat.ru*, which lists the real or alleged offenses of "compromised" politicians.)

A handsome, trim man in wire-rimmed glasses, Ryzhkov goes in for what Americans might call extreme tourism. Last year, he and several friends trekked on horseback through 150 miles of virgin Siberian taiga to a glacier, fording rivers and subsisting on fish they caught under the ice and cooked over a campfire. The journal of the Russian Geographic Society published Ryzhkov's travel diary, which later won the Society's prize for the best travelogue. (Ryzhkov reprised the journey this past March, in temperatures reaching -40 Fahrenheit.)

It seemed in character, then, that he chose as the locus for our interview not a stuffy Duma reception room, but the slick, chrome-and-glass Zen Café (a Moscow Starbucks-like chain) where he stops every morning for breakfast on his way to work. The place is on a cobbled street not far from Red Square that's closed to cars and filled with bookstores and restaurants. On that fine July morning, it was indistinguishable from a quiet side street in Paris, Rome, or Berlin. I found Ryzhkov drinking a double espresso and reading newspapers.

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Ryzhkov says his "dream" is to "ensure the success of Russia's second attempt to become free." In his keynote speech at the conference, he compared today's Russia to the giant in a folktale who is bound hand and foot—bound, that is, by a corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy. "Our task," he said, "is to free the giant, give him a chance to breathe deeply and freely, and allow him to march toward liberty and progress."

According to Ryzhkov, it is impossible to live with dignity unless government is honest. And honest government can be ensured "only by democratic principles and individual freedom." He closed his conference speech with, "Long live democratic Russia!"

In private, he expressed confidence in Russia's ability to become fully democratic—and contempt for those he sees as blocking the way. Of the lies the Kremlin spreads in the West, Ryzhkov told me, one of the most pernicious is that the Russian people are somehow different from others and not ready for democracy. According to this party line, Putin is more liberal than most Russians, and the only alternative to him is a fascist nationalist. "Nonsense!" Ryzhkov said angrily. "Our people are normal, no different from any other! They want to live in a normal country with liberty, democracy, and prosperity."

To Ryzhkov, Putin's proto-authoritarian centralization, with its pressure on freedom of speech, harassment of civic organizations, and elimination of local self-government, is not only anticonstitutional, it is dangerous as well. Instead of the promised stability, Putin's policies have brought tension, destabilization, and record corruption. Nor has the concentration of power—which Putin dresses up in the phrase "vertical power"—protected the country from terrorism or civil and ethnic strife. More people have died in the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Northern Ossetia, and Dagestan) under Putin than in the 1990s, Ryzhkov said. Dagestan, the largest of the autonomous republics of the region (population 2,179,000), is virtually ungovernable today.

In Ryzhkov's view, the country is being pushed to a "historic dead-end" by authoritarianism, state capitalism, corruption, and the oil-based economy. We were promised a "firm, top-down government," Ryzhkov said, but what we have today is a "loose nail—the president's popularity rating—on which the entire state hangs." The more authoritarian it becomes, the more the regime distances itself from the people and the country, the more it fears free debate and free elections, the deafer and blinder it is and the less capable it grows of solving the big problems Russia faces. These include a deepening demographic crisis brought about by high mortality and a below-replacement birthrate; an incipient AIDS pandemic; sharp economic inequality; and the declining quality of health care and education for the poor.

As a party-builder, Ryzhkov seems to have learned from the mistakes of the first generation of post-Soviet democrats. He wants his party constructed from the bottom up, with maximum autonomy for local chapters. He is determined to avoid the top-heavy, Moscow-centric model that binds local activists hand and foot by requiring permission from headquarters for the minutest change in local alliances or campaign tactics, and in which the incessant bickering of leaders at the center is replicated in the regions, demoralizing pro-reform voters and leading to political defeat.

The great promise of Ryzhkov's model is that it takes into account Russia's enormous economic, political, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Like the centralized state that Putin is attempting to recreate, a centralized, all-Russia political party must inevitably be a shaky and artificial creation, kept alive by what Russians call "administrative resources" and generous funding from state coffers—as is today's "party of power," United Russia. (The only exception is the Communist party, with its uniquely disciplined but actuarially challenged electorate.) The Republicans' new platform calls for the broadest possible electoral alliances with other democrats at the local level and party membership open to anyone who wants to join, including members of other democratic parties.

I suggested to Ryzhkov that he is building a party of the American, rather than the European, kind: loosely organized, with self-governing chapters that come together, after much gnashing of teeth, only for national elections. Because of America's diversity, a Democrat from Manhattan or San Francisco is almost as far from his or her Texas or Georgia counterpart as he is from a Republican, I told him. This is a novel concept in the Russian context, dominated as it is by the century-old Leninist tradition of "democratic centralism," with its ideological uniformity and unconditional subjugation to the "center," copied from the German Social Democrats whose iron discipline Lenin so admired. Yes, Ryzhkov replied, somewhat to my surprise, the American model *is* different—and it's precisely the sort of party he has in mind.

Will Ryzhkov succeed at turning the Republican party into a national democratic movement, capable of winning a sizable presence in the Duma in 2007 and mounting a credible campaign for president in 2008?

The obstacles are enormous. At Putin's "suggestion," the Duma a month ago passed legislation eliminating the single-member districts from which half of the Duma

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deputies have been elected until now. Instead, in 2007, all candidates must run on party lists. Guidelines adopted in November 2004 further require the parties to jump through so many hoops to register their candidates that they are almost entirely at the mercy of local authorities and the Kremlin-subservient Central Electoral Commission. For instance, to qualify for the ballot, a political entity now must have 50,000 registered members (up from 10,000), with at least 500 members in each of Russia's 89 regions (up from 100). This in a country where fewer than 1 percent of registered voters have belonged to any party at all. To comply with the new laws, existing parties must reregister by January 1, 2006, which means the Republicans must more than triple their membership, from 15,000 to 50,000, in mere months.

In addition, the heretofore common practice of two or more parties' joining to form an electoral bloc has been prohibited, while the minimum share of the national vote a party must win in order to secure seats in the Duma has been raised from 5 percent to 7 percent. Russian observers and media are now barred from observing the count on Election Day, and representatives of international monitoring organizations will be admitted only by personal invitation.

Meeting these requirements will be a challenge, to say the least, at a time when support for all the democratic parties combined barely reaches 7 percent, including 2 percent for the revived Republicans. In a nationwide poll in July, only 4 percent of respondents said they would vote for Ryzhkov for president if the election were held that week. Yet continuing squabbles dampen any hope of the democrats' uniting in a single party and behind one presidential candidate.

The liberal parties' disastrous showing in the last Duma election, in December 2003, was only in small measure due to government manipulation. Both publicly and privately, democrats admit their defeat was a result of their inability to stop attacking one another, to forge a common platform and joint electoral list, and thus give their supporters something to rally around. In that election, an estimated 9 million voters who had supported liberal parties in the 1990s stayed home—or around 9 percent of the eligible electorate and at least 18 percent of those who actually cast ballots. Still, in a speech at the July 2 conference, a representative of Grigory Yavlinsky's Yabloko party reprised his boss's notorious obstreperousness, refusing to join with other democrats unless they publicly admit their past "mistakes" and join Yabloko. (At the time, Yaboloko's support in the polls stood at 3 percent.)

In the end, however, the democrats' core problem is not one of supply but of demand. If politically active Russians want a democratic breakthrough—as the Georgians, Ukrainians, and Kyrgyz all showed they did in the past 12 months—democratic parties and leaders will appear in short order. Think of the emergence in 1989 of Boris Yeltsin, drummed out of the Politburo only a year and a half before. The main questions, then, are: Where is Russia today in the cycle of revolution and reaction, and where does it appear to be going?

When in the early 1990s Russians emerged from seven decades of totalitarianism into an institutional wasteland, the real choice they faced was not between good, clean, liberal capitalism on the one hand, and cutthroat Marxian "primitive capitalism" on the other. Rather, they could choose between the latter—attended by soaring inequality and the capture of the state by "oligarchs," nasty, rapacious, and lawless, pouring buckets of dirt on one another through the television networks and newspapers they owned, and deploying their media empires to destroy politicians and force political change to advance their business interests—and some form of continuing state control of the economy and politics.

Amid the painful, creative chaos of the 1990s, Russian society slowly built modern political and economic institutions and regenerated mechanisms of self-regulation and self-restraint. Through this difficult period, Russians showed remarkable resilience and prescience, stoically opting for economic and political liberty, no matter how unattractively incarnated, through a succession of elections and referendums. But after the 1998 financial crisis and ruble devaluation, their tolerance for conflict and their faith that self-rule and democratic liberties would in the end bring stability and economic revival were badly damaged.

People were tired. As in every classic restoration after revolution, the longing for physical safety and political and economic stability came to overshadow all other goals and aspirations. As Tocqueville said of Bonapartism, the French "abandon[ed] their original ideal and, turning their backs on freedom . . . acquiesced in an equality of servitude under the master of all Europe." What has turned out to be the Putin restoration, with its "managed democracy" and "vertical power," is no different. It is one more instance of what Eric Fromm called the "flight from freedom." Russians were ready to give a strongman a chance.

Now, seven years later, trends in public opinion seem to indicate a gradual shift away from that preference for a largely illusory stability at the expense of economic and political liberty. This suggests that Russians may have had just enough of a taste of strongman rule to inoculate them

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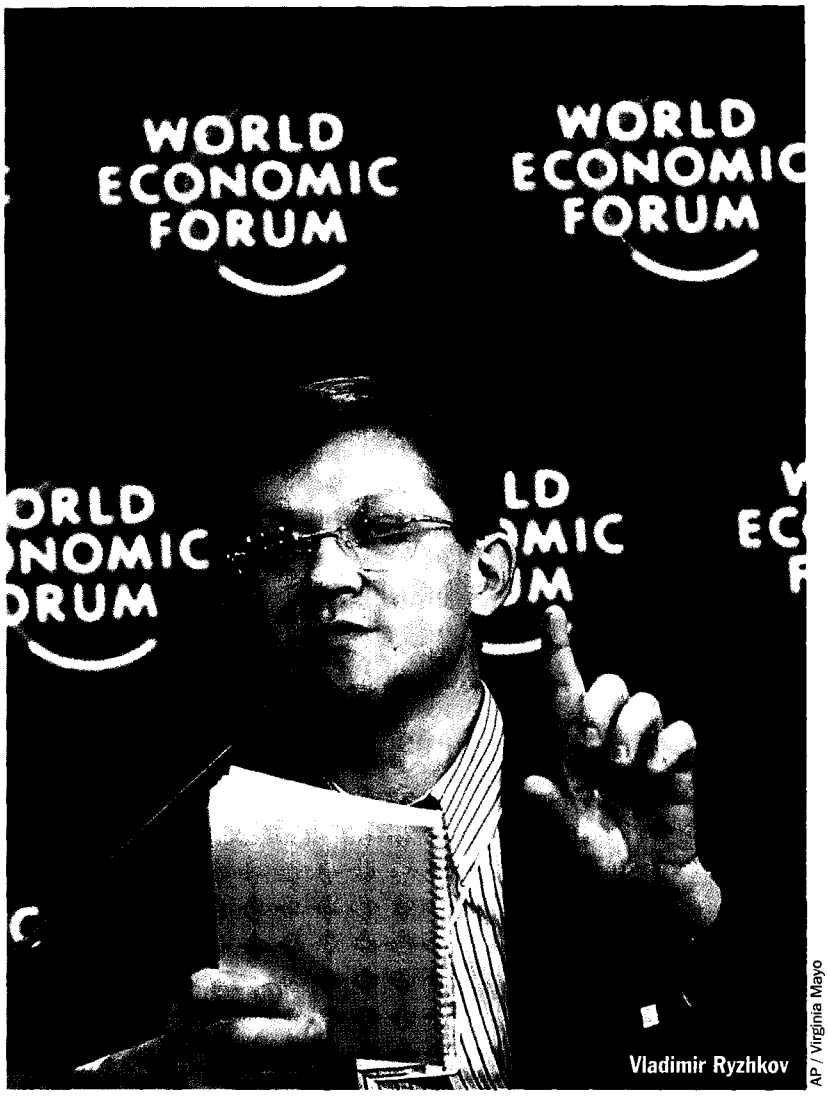

Vladimir Ryzhkov

AP / Virginia Mayo

against the temptation of seemingly simple quasi-authoritarian solutions to their still enormous problems. Asked in July whether "Russia needs democracy," three times as many survey respondents said "yes" as "no": 66 percent and 21 percent. (As usual, the differences among age groups were huge: In the 18-24 years old group, 80 percent responded positively and 13 percent negatively; among those 55 and older, the numbers were 52 percent and 30 percent.)

While the electorate is still apathetic (in June almost half of respondents could not name the party they would vote for if elections were held next week), the "democrats" were the choice of 14 percent, second only to the Communists (17 percent), and ahead of both the nationalist "patriots" (4 percent) and the Kremlin-directed party of power, United Russia (12 percent).

Perhaps most important, Russians are showing renewed appreciation for *specific* political and economic liberties—or, rather, renewed opposition to their curtailment. Presented with a list of quasi-authoritarian political and economic arrangements, two-thirds or more of a national sample opposed all of them. Only 27 percent, for instance, agreed that mass media, political parties, and civic organizations "must be organized in the interests of the security and unity of the country," and only 19 percent agreed that the president should appoint all federal and regional leaders. The idea that the Kremlin should "control the work" of legislatures, courts, and the media was agreeable to a mere 16 percent; and giving the armed forces and state security organizations "a privileged position in society" to 12 percent. State control of businesses was supported by a larger minority, 29 percent. Even as Vladimir Putin enjoyed an approval rating of around 70 percent, only one-third of Russians agreed that all state power should be concentrated in the president's hands, and only 29 percent thought there should be no term limit (it's currently eight years) on his tenure in office.

Vladimir Ryzhkov, then, appears to be right: There is nothing abnormal about Russians' political attitudes. He seems also to be correct in insisting that Russia is far from happy behind its façade of relative placidity.

This past July, polls found that the government's economic policy was "unsatisfactory" to three-quarters of respondents, and only 9 percent believed things would change for the better soon. Two-thirds were unhappy about "what is going on in the country," and half thought it was "moving in the wrong direction." And in late July, a leading national newspaper, *Izvestia*, published the results of yet another poll: For the first time since Putin came to power, the share of those in favor of fundamental economic and political reforms equaled those who "long for stability." Each opinion garnered around 44 percent. Especially interesting is the fact that the call for change was most prevalent among those who have "made it": post-Soviet middle-class families, with per capita monthly incomes of over 5,000 rubles (about $178). In this group, 53 percent want a new perestroika.

Izvestia's headline was "Back to the 1990s. People are tired of stability and demand change." Ryzhkov and his party are standing by. ♦

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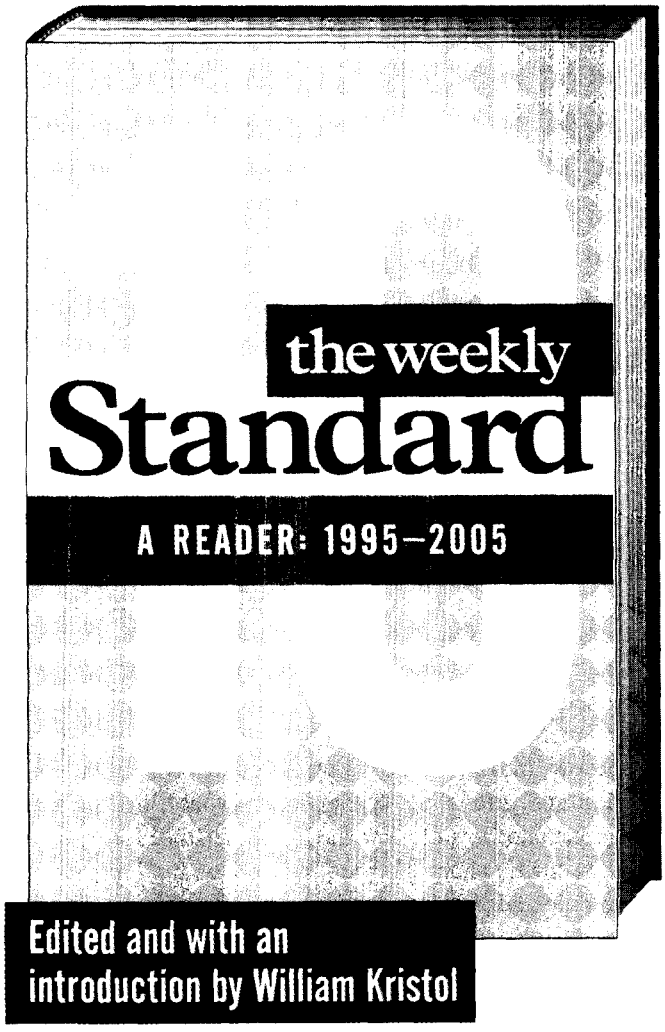

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Blood, Toil, Tears, etc.

Is there anything new to be said about Winston Churchill? By Andrew Roberts

"Of the writing of biographies of Sir Winston Churchill there shall be no end" should be an established publishers' mantra. Yet writers really do now need a very good reason to join such an overcrowded field. Fortunately, the military historian Richard Holmes provides a truly fresh interpretation of the great man, something this reviewer was beginning to doubt was still possible.

Holmes acknowledges with enthusiasm the magnificent achievement of Churchill in Britain's *annus mirabilis*, those amazing 12 months between the evacuation from Dunkirk in June 1940 and Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941. Yet he also appreciates how, to have climbed to that towering position as prime minister, Churchill had spent a lifetime cutting corners and imposing what Holmes calls his "monumental egoism" across the entire political scene. There is an edgy, harsh, occasionally downright unpleasant, side to Churchill in these pages that Holmes argues was the inevitable obverse side to an otherwise great character.

In the Footsteps of Churchill
A Study in Character
by Richard Holmes
Basic, 352 pp., $27.50

Holmes's mature, and even occasionally wise, portrait is studded with facts about the period and episodes in Churchill's life that amuse, engage, and entice. The author's eye for the telling detail, as well as his deep immersion in all the relevant archives, raises this book far above the common ruck of revisionist Churchilliana. Holmes puts a strong case "for seeing Churchill as a Shakespearean character, in fact three of them if Henry V, King Lear and Falstaff are allowed." (There is nothing of the vacillating introspection of a Hamlet there.)

The sheer quality of writing also distinguishes this work from many others on the same well-worn subject. "His birthplace Blenheim Palace still sends its glare of cold command across the landscape," writes Holmes of Churchill, "his London apartment in Morpeth Mansions sits comfortably in

Andrew Roberts is the author, most recently, of Hitler and Stalin: Secrets of Leadership.

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the shadow of Westminster Cathedral; one can almost catch the whiff of his cigar in the Pinafore Room of the Savoy, and his presence at his beloved Chartwell is somehow palpable."

Churchill received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953, between François Mauriac and Ernest Hemingway—they gave it to *real* writers in those days—but as Holmes points out, much of Churchill's writing was devoted to proving how he had always been right throughout his career. Many politicians write solely for that reason, of course; but then, we are accustomed to viewing Churchill as somehow different. Furthermore, Holmes shows how Churchill was not a scintillating orator all his life; in fact, as he puts it, "In the Thirties Winston became a long-winded bore, and his habit of leaving the chamber after speaking made other MPs less inclined to give him a respectful hearing." (Holmes's use of Churchill's Christian name throughout the book is the only thing that slightly jars in this otherwise fascinating and original study.)

Despite Holmes's occasionally astringent criticisms of Churchill, this is by no means overall a critical book, just one that puts searing honesty before fawning veneration. Whenever Churchill fell below the level of events, Holmes says so; but when he soared far above them—as in 1940 and 1941—he says so, too, with an enviable eloquence.

One of the curious aspects of Churchill historiography is that the heaviest blows against his reputation have been dealt by historians who generally admire him, like Holmes, rather than the "revisionist" historians like David Irving and Ralph Raico who detest everything he stood for. Richard Holmes unreservedly lauds Churchill for what he achieved when Britain stood alone; but otherwise, the man who emerges from these pages is a deeply flawed individual, so grindingly ambitious that he will do almost anything to get ahead.

In particular the young paladin Churchill receives as serious a roasting as any I have read. Sounding more like Sherlock than Richard, Holmes writes: "I confess to a deep sense of sadness when my enquiry led me to a close study of the documents in the Companion to the first volume of Winston's life. I defy anyone to like the young man who emerges from these pages."

According to Holmes, Churchill bullied his widowed mother for cash unmercifully, even charging to her the cost of his wreath on the grave of his beloved nursemaid Mrs. Everest. At 19 he nearly accidentally killed his 13-year-old brother Jack while out rowing on Lake Lausanne, and afterwards made himself out to be the hero of the incident. As a young Hussar officer he took part in the vicious and hypocritical ostracism of a fellow second-lieutenant, who was forced to resign his commission because he only had an income of £500 a year (when Churchill's own was £300).

Holmes charges that, soon after that unpleasant incident, Churchill was possibly involved in a race-fixing scandal over the Subaltern's Cup jump race and that, in the Boer war, he escaped from the Pretoria prisoner of war camp without his colleagues, after having arranged to go over the wall as a team. He is also accused of loving power more than valuing freedom, and of leaving the trenches of the Western Front ("when it suited him") in order to rebuild his shattered post-Dardanelles career. As Holmes caustically comments: "Over five million of his countrymen did not have that option."

Of some—if not most—of these harsh charges, Churchill was most probably innocent; hardly any of those five million soldiers were MPs who could make a brilliant wartime minister of munitions, for example. But for Holmes they, together, amount to a character indictment that stands really until the Wilderness Years of the 1930s, when Churchill redeemed all in his lonely and principled stand against the appeasement of Nazi Germany.

This book was timed to coincide with an eight-part BBC television series, which was controversial and widely watched for the same accusations made in the book. Even after the anti-appeasement struggle, Churchill is accused of vindictiveness against the losers; when he was asked for an eightieth birthday tribute to Stanley Baldwin in 1947, he came up with this line: "It would have been better for our country if he had never lived." (Which was, unsurprisingly, not used by the organizers.) It was hardly in the spirit of his well-known phrase: "In victory, magnanimity."

In a sense, all of Holmes's criticisms of Churchill's earlier and later career merely serve to put into greater perspective the sublime Churchill of 1940-41, when the prime minister "nothing common did, or mean / Upon that memorable scene." Of the effective sacrifice of the British Empire for the sake of winning the war, Holmes writes that Churchill "spent a windfall inheritance to assure a future for those values the civilized world regards as inevitable," which is a wise judgment far removed from that of the so-called revisionist school of Second World War Churchill-knockers.

Yet Holmes can also be boldly politically incorrect when it suits him, as when he points out that, if the movement for self-government for India, which Churchill resolutely opposed in the thirties, had got its way, Britain would have been denuded of the largest all-volunteer army in the history of mankind in the struggle against Nazism. These facts need to be stated, and Holmes does so with refreshing candor.

This book is suffused with quotes that will delight cognoscenti of Churchilliana. "There is not one single social or economic principle or concept in the philosophy of the Russian Bolshevik," he once wrote, "which has not been realized, carried into action, and enshrined in immutable laws a million years ago by the White Ant." For all the criticisms of individual aspects of Churchill's "monumental egoism"—which not even the most devout Churchill-worshipper would deny did exist—Holmes has written an intelligent, nuanced but, overall, an affectionate elegy. Churchill was indeed a man you'd want to go tiger shooting with. It would just be afterwards, hearing the exaggerated tales of his bravery, that would have been frustrating. ♦

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Once in Babylon

The Flood, immortality, sex—it's all here.

BY JOHN SIMON

It is the first work of literature ever written down, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and it's a masterpiece. Ironically, it stems from that cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia, which has gone by many names but is now Iraq. Where once the civilizing art of letters sprung up, there now is war and destruction. There was plenty of strife in Gilgamesh's time, too, but it was waged nobly by facing antagonists; no roadside bombs or crazed self-immolations.

Around 2700 BC, there may have existed in Sumerian Uruk a ruler named Gilgamesh, who built a great wall around the city. But he could have been a myth, which may have helped him become a judge in the underworld. Whether lays about him were part of an oral tradition has been disputed; certain it is that some were written down in the late third millennium BC in cuneiform on clay tablets.

The history of how these and later tablets were excavated is long and fascinating, and can be readily gotten from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated and edited by Benjamin R. Foster, (W.W. Norton, $10.95) and highly recommended. Here you will find the principal versions of the epic in sound, scholarly translations, duly introduced and annotated. Fascinating, too, as you'll gather from the book, is the history of the poem itself, which exists, after the early Sumerian fragments, in the Babylonian-language "old version" of 1700 BC. From this derives the standard version, prepared in the seventh century BC for the marvelous library of the great king Ashurbanipal. There are later versions in Hittite and Hurrian; indeed, parts have been dug up in Mesopotamia, Syria, the Levant, and Anatolia. There is a reference to Gilgamesh even in the Dead Sea scrolls.

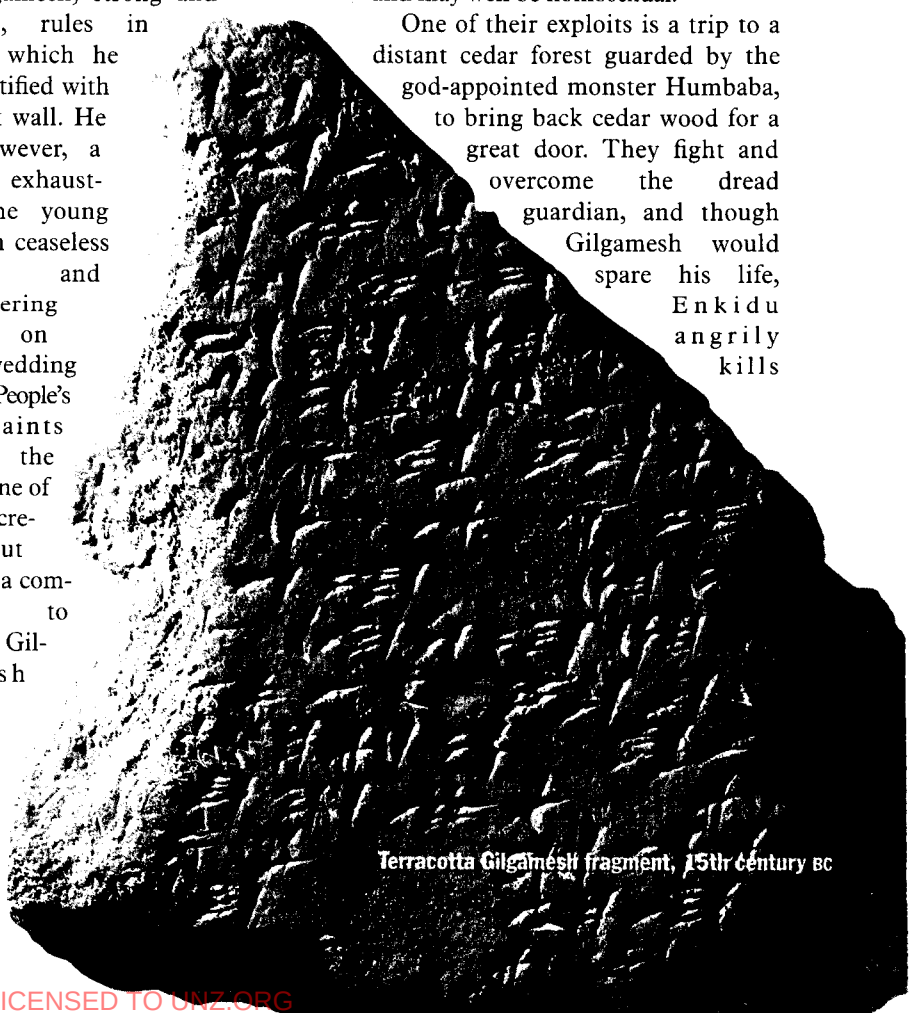
Remember, though, that sections of the story are not available in any version so far excavated, and that the languages in question are imperfectly known, so that even available words and phrases have been variously interpreted. There have been translations into many modern languages, often by established poets, and the epic has elicited much literary criticism. What, then, is this widespread and long-lived poem about?

Gilgamesh, strong and valiant, rules in Uruk, which he has fortified with a giant wall. He is, however, a tyrant, exhausting the young men in ceaseless sports, and deflowering brides on their wedding night. People's complaints reach the gods, one of whom creates out of clay a companion to occupy Gilgamesh more constructively. This is the primitive giant Enkidu, naked and hairy, living on the steppes with fellow animals, and destroying the traps men set for them.

One day he scares the daylights out of a trapper, who then consults with Gilgamesh, himself a giant, one-third human and two-thirds divine, his mother being the wild cow-goddess Ninsun. She counsels him and interprets his dreams about Enkidu. Gilgamesh instructs the trapper to conduct Shamhat—a priestess-prostitute in the temple of Ishtar, goddess of love and war—to the drinking place of the animals, there to seduce and thus humanize Enkidu.

This happens, and after seven days of nonstop sex, Enkidu is shunned by the animals as no longer one of them. Shamhat now combs and clothes him, and induces him to come meet Gilgamesh. The two mighty ones fight. It is unclear who wins—perhaps it is a draw—but the pair become boon companions. It is an Achilles/Patroclus or Jonathan/David kind of relationship, and may well be homosexual.

One of their exploits is a trip to a distant cedar forest guarded by the god-appointed monster Humbaba, to bring back cedar wood for a great door. They fight and overcome the dread guardian, and though Gilgamesh would spare his life, Enkidu angrily kills



Art Resource

Terracotta Gilgamesh fragment, 15th century BC

John Simon writes about theater for Bloomberg News.

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him. Back in Uruk there are celebrations, and the goddess Ishtar, seeing Gilgamesh in his finery, becomes enamored and asks him to marry her. He is indignant and insults her, reproaching her with the sticky ends to which her six previous husbands have come. Furious, she prevails upon the chief god Anu to send down the Bull of Heaven to avenge her. The warrior friends kill the bull, and Enkidu even tosses the beast's haunch at the goddess.

After the victory banquet, Enkidu learns in a dream that the gods will spare Gilgamesh, but punish him. He curses Shamhat, who lured him there; but Shamash, god of justice, invoking the wonderful friendship with Gilgamesh, gets him to bless her instead. In another dream, he sees the terrors of the underworld: the dead squatting in utter darkness. A god-decreed illness overtakes him; he dies, leaving the disconsolate Gilgamesh to bury and grieve for him.

Gilgamesh now finally understands and fears death; he dons lowly animal skins, and sets out in search of Utnapishtim, to whom the gods granted immortality, to learn his secret. The long, hard journey leads to the scorpion monsters, guardians of the tunnel to the underworld, the very passage the sun traverses as it journeys from sunset to sunrise. The scorpion monster would deny Gilgamesh passage, but his wife changes his mind. Still, the hero must negotiate the tunnel before the sun, which would burn him to a crisp.

In a heroic race, Gilgamesh beats the sun to it, and emerges in a magic garden whose fruits and vegetables are made of jewels. He arrives at a tavern at the end of the earth, kept by the (possibly) divine Siduri—although it is hard to know for what possible travelers. At first mistrustful, then trying to persuade Gilgamesh that immortality is for the gods alone, and he should desist and stick to eating, drinking, and merrymaking, she finally relents and directs him to Urshanabi, Utnapishtim's boatman. (What need has that immortal of a boatman? Oh, well.) The boatman, after Gilgamesh smashes some mysterious stone charms of his, consents to ferry him across the dread Waters of Death. (Think Charon.) It is a difficult trip, necessitating even Gilgamesh's clothing being converted into sails. Finally, they make it to the wharf where Utnapishtim lives. After not unjustifiably chiding him, the immortal tells Gilgamesh the story of the flood and his survival.

The details of the story largely coincide with those of the biblical flood. (The great British archaeologist Leonard Woolley demonstrated not only that these were two versions of the identical tale, but also that some such flood actually occurred.) Not having to use violence on Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh discovers that knowledge is of greater use than force. He learns how, after seven days of rain, Utnapishtim's boat had landed on a mountain. Birds released confirmed the existence of terra firma. The man and his wife were granted eternal life, but far away from the rest of humanity.

To test Gilgamesh's qualifications for immortality, Utnapishtim asks him to stay awake for seven days. Our hero fails the test and would be sent back empty-handed, but the sage's wife pleads with her husband to grant the intrepid seeker a gift, and he directs Gilgamesh to the plant of rejuvenation growing on the sea bottom. Gilgamesh ties stones to his feet, dives and plucks the plant, but wants to take it home and first try it out on some old man. Urshanabi and he travel back, but at one camp, Gilgamesh takes a swim, leaving the plant on shore. A snake eats it, and slithers away rejuvenated, shedding its old skin. In one of the epic's not-infrequent comic moments, Gilgamesh reflects on having done no good to himself, but a great deal to a reptile. Finally, he and the boatman reach Uruk, the beautifully laid out and grandly walled city, held up for the boatman's admiration. So the story ends where it began.

What I have given here is its bare bones, minus much savory meat. The epic has become world famous; no less an artist than Rainer Maria Rilke wrote in a letter that he found it "tremendous . . . the greatest thing one can experience. *Es geht mich an.* [It concerns me.]" And it does concern all of us, as can be best ascertained from reading the two English versions by genuine poets.

Here is the trapper's speech to Shamhat in David Ferry's 1992 version (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, $11):

That is Enkidu, Shamhat, show him your breasts,
Show him your beauty. Spread out your cloak on the ground.
Lie down on it. The wildman will look at you.
Show him your body. The hairy-bodied man
Will come to you and lie down on you; and then
Show him the things a woman knows how to do.
The gazelles and with them all the other creatures
Will flee from him who ranged the hills with them.

And here is Stephen Mitchell's 2004 version (Free Press, $24):

Look, the trapper said, there he is.
Now use your love-arts. Strip off your robe
And lie here naked, with your legs apart.
Stir up his lust when he approaches.
Touch him, excite him, take his breath
with your kisses, show him what a woman is.
The animals who knew him in the wilderness
Will be bewildered, and will leave him forever.

The topos of woman as seductress, sometimes as sacred prostitute and savior of society, has made history. She appears in the Bible as Judith of Bethulia, and eventually as the heroine of two great plays about Judith by Friedrich Hebbel and Jean Giraudoux. She is also depicted in many famous Renaissance and later paintings. A similar figure is the heroine of a once popular play by Maurice Maeterlinck, set to music (though unfinished) by Serge Rachmaninov. She goes through legend (Lady Godiva) and the arts, but she was first seen in *The Epic of Gilgamesh.* ♦

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The Real Deal

An author answers the question: What made Reagan tick? BY PETER HANNAFORD

In 147 pages of text, Lee Edwards has accomplished what Ronald Reagan's official biographer, Edmund Morris, was unable to do in 674: He has captured the essence of the 40th president's character.

Unlike Morris, who resorted to the dubious device of inserting fictional characters and himself into the biographical narrative, Edwards works his way concisely and precisely through the chronology of Reagan's life, pinpointing the people and events that solidified his values and shaped his worldview. At the same time, his clear writing style carries the reader along smoothly from beginning to end.

The Essential Ronald Reagan
A Profile in Courage, Justice, and Wisdom
by Lee Edwards
Rowman & Littlefield, 147 pp., $26.95

While Edwards does not uncover new facts about Ronald Reagan's childhood and youth, he concentrates his efforts on relationships and events that show the development of Reagan's character.

The role of his parents in the development of Reagan's personality unfolds early in the book. His mother, Nelle, deeply religious and a teetotaler, made it clear to her sons that her husband's alcoholism was an illness. Thus, Reagan had a sympathetic understanding of his father, Jack. From his mother came his deep faith, his love of reading, his sense of duty, and the beginnings of his interest in acting (his mother often gave dramatic readings at church groups). His father, a cheerful optimist much of the time (even when business was bad), was a great storyteller.

Reagan's acting abilities developed while he was at Eureka College, where he also gave his first political speech (during a student strike to save classes and teachers' jobs in the midst of the Depression). Not long after landing his first job in radio, he learned—through making mistakes—the value of preparation, a lesson he carried with him throughout his career in films and public life. It was at WHO in Des Moines, where he was a sportscaster in the 1930s, that he showed his first concerns about "big government." His fellow broadcaster, H.R. Gross, later a member of Congress, discussed his conservative views often with Reagan, then a New Deal Democrat.

Edwards gives us an insight into Reagan's developing interest in world affairs from his early years in films. He tells of a fellow actor who said Reagan had "all the dope on just everything, from this quarter's up-or-down figures on GNP growth, Lenin's grandfather's occupation, baseball players' ERAs [and] the outlook for California sugar beet production."

Too nearsighted to serve overseas, Reagan, in World War II, was assigned to the Army Air Force's training film unit in Southern California. The details of this are covered in other books; however, the author reveals that Reagan, when he asked that his promotion from captain to major be canceled, wrote, "Who was I to be a major for serving in California without ever hearing a shot fired?"

At the end of the war, civilian bureaucrats took over where Reagan's unit operated and he had his first experience with (civilian) bureaucratic "empire-building." Reagan described it as resulting in "the first crack in my staunch liberalism." In those days, he had frequent discussions about issues with conservative friends such as businessman Justin Dart and actor Dick Powell.

The author takes us through Reagan's family life, first with Jane Wyman, then with Nancy Reagan, who was to become the single most important person in his world. His days as host of *General Electric Theatre*, and his question-and-answer sessions with GE workers, are covered. These events helped shaped Reagan's favored format for later political campaigns. At the same time, he bonded with average working men and women.

Later, in 1965, when Reagan was deciding to run for governor of California, Edwards visited his home for an interview and had a few moments to scan the books in the library. He was impressed by the volumes on economics and history, much read because they were "dog-eared and underlined." Edwards adds: "This was the . . . library not of a shallow actor, dangling at the end of someone's strings, but a thinking, reasoning person who had arrived at his conservatism the old-fashioned way—through careful study and serious reflection."

The book covers the high points of Reagan's eight years as governor of California, and his 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns. Entering the White House, he had a carefully prepared agenda with three major objectives: straighten out the economy, reduce the influence on decision-making of the federal government, and end the Cold War. His tax-reduction legislation of 1981 was a great personal triumph for Reagan, the author contends, for it set the stage for a long-running economic expansion that lasted well beyond Reagan's White House years. As to social policy reforms, the welfare reforms enacted in 1996 were a direct legacy of Reagan's efforts dating back from his gubernatorial and presidential years, according to Edwards.

Peter Hannaford, whose long association with Ronald Reagan began with a gubernatorial appointment in California in 1971, is author of Reagan and His Ranch: The Western White House, 1981-1989.

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The author saves his most detailed exposition for Reagan's strategy for bringing the Cold War to an end. He meets head-on the argument, still clung to by Reagan critics on the left, that the Soviet Union would have collapsed of its own weight with Reagan just a lucky bystander.

Edwards reveals the series of studies and National Security Decision Directives initiated by Reagan and his administration in 1981-82 to reverse the expansion of the Soviet Union and undermine its economy. Before he became president, Reagan suspected, and, once he received classified briefings, knew that the Soviets were straining their economy dangerously in order to build their armaments. His intention was to push them to the brink so they would have to choose between collapse coming to the table to negotiate reductions and elimination of arms.

The "Reagan Doctrine," as it came to be called, moved forward in several ways. In Afghanistan, it was supplying shoulder-fired missile launchers to bring down Soviet helicopters. In Poland, it was providing aid to Solidarity to confront the Communist regime.

As events unfolded one at a time, it was difficult for all but Reagan and his strategic planners to see them as part of a plan. For the public, it was akin to seeing snapshots now and then instead of an album full of photos. It is understandable that, at the time, "arms control" professionals and left-of-center journalists and academics criticized Reagan's moves, for they were seeing these through an intellectual rearview mirror. For the arms control fraternity, it was a case of "not invented here." As to the others, they did not take Reagan seriously. Thus, his "evil empire" speech, the deployment of cruise missiles in Western Europe, and the Strategic Defense Initiative were all denounced.

The public record now shows clearly the Reagan strategy and the various tactics used to carry it out. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a large body of evidence—written records and testimony by former officials—makes it clear that the Kremlin took Reagan seriously, and was especially worried about Strategic Defense Initiative. In fact, Mikhail Gorbachev played his last card at the Reykjavik summit in 1986 when he insisted, unexpectedly, that Reagan keep SDI in the laboratory. When Reagan refused and left, it was the climactic event of the Cold War. Reagan had trumped him.

The book is not error-free. For example, in illustrating California's diverse composition, the author includes Los Alamos, which is in New Mexico. He describes the frequency of Reagan's newspaper column, resumed after the 1976 Republican National Convention, as "biweekly." It was semiweekly; that is, twice a week. These and a few other glitches, however, do not mar the flow of the narrative or the thrust of the author's argument that Ronald Reagan had in him uncommon shares of courage, justice, and prudence—the essential qualities of leadership. ♦

Persian Reverie

Seeing Iran while wearing blinders.

BY GRAEME WOOD

In *Taboos on Intercourse with Strangers* (1922) J.G. Frazer informs us that Persians and Afghans once greeted foreigners with fire. The fire preemptively burnt away the magic that strangers might bring into Persian territory and use to bewitch the locals.

"Sometimes," Frazer continues, "a tray of lighted embers is thrown under the hoofs of the traveler's horse, with the words, 'You are welcome.'"

The Lonely Planet Guide to Iran
by Andrew Burke, Mark Elliot, and Kamin Mohammadi
Lonely Planet, 408 pp., $24.99

This schizophrenic salutation—half sincere greeting, half pelting with burning coals—is something any tourist guidebook to Iran, past or present, must struggle to explain. Few modern countries present a more perplexing mix of smothering hospitality and smothering suspicion. Toward guests, Iranians show chivalry so grandiose that Westerners mistake it for mockery. And yet that generosity coexists with constant and malevolent official scrutiny: In Tehran, one traveler told me, a telephone operator interrupted his call home to Paris and politely asked for him to wait while the government switched eavesdroppers.

Lonely Planet publishes a guidebook for travelers who thrive on these contradictions, or at least do not mind them. *The Lonely Planet Guide to Iran* has insinuated itself into the backpack of nearly every young French or German holidaymaker in Iran, and the books are now as ubiquitous as Baedeker's among the traveling classes a century ago. To Americans (whom Tehran bars from independent tourism, and whose collective imagination sees Iran as full of howling religious crazies and plutonium fetishists), the European impulse to make a pleasure tour to the Islamic Republic begs for an explanation. Lonely Planet's guidebook provides one.

The Melbourne-based publisher researched its fourth edition in late 2003 and early 2004, and the finished product bears the marks of the anticlerical sentiment that was, by then, general among Iranians. The guide

Graeme Wood is a writer living in northern Iraq.

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acknowledges Iranians' eagerness for change, their government's brutal efforts to suppress it, and Mohammad Khatami's craven betrayal in not implementing his promised reforms. The authors shroud the word "pious" with well-earned scare quotes when it refers to the dubious pieties of *sharia*, as interpreted by the mullahs. For a book whose sales would plummet to zero if banned in Iran, these whiffs of defiance deserve appreciation.

Less forgivable is the guide's unwillingness to educate its readers minimally about Iran's dissidents and its most execrable political crimes. It neglects to mention Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the esteemed mullah who called for Tehran's turbaned tyrants to explain themselves to the Iranian people and to God. The guide leaves out Zahra Kazemi, the Canadian journalist raped and murdered by regime thugs; the few European travelers who know her name have learnt it only because reproachful Canadian travelers sometimes bring the subject up. These are sins of omission, but they are not minor omissions, and there is something rotten about any guidebook to Iran that is guilty of them.

From one standpoint, the silence on these matters is venial, since the book is meant to guide vacationers, not take political sides. But it is difficult to imagine how any book about Iran, whatever its purpose, could present a morally scrupulous portrait of the country without reference to the clerical wickedness that poisons every aspect of Iranian life. And it is troubling to hear tourists of the European persuasion excuse their own political ignorance by self-identifying as "just a tourist." How many visitors to the Soviet Union were ignorant of the name Andrei Sakharov? How many who made holidays to apartheid South Africa had never heard of Nelson Mandela or Steven Biko? Traveling at its best helps one lose illusions, and in this case, a guidebook is helping travelers sustain one.

What makes *Lonely Planet*'s embarrassment at frank political discussion all the more stunning is that few countries have recent politics as thrilling or as high-stakes as Iran's. Iran is, after all, a mullahocracy with living memory of mass millenarianism; it bursts with frustrated democratic zeal; it kills and tortures internationally and has all but clinched second place (after Pakistan) in the Islamic nuclear derby. Many Iranians still harbor a Khomeinist death wish held over from the 1980s. The 65-year-old hotelier in Shiraz who put me up for a week in 2004 told me he sincerely wished the Americans would invade, so he could don again his battle dress, rush tanks, and eventually find the martyrdom that had eluded him so cruelly during the Iran-Iraq war.

But the guidebook sidesteps before every type of fanaticism, except when circumstances leave it no choice. Its write-up of Bushehr, for example, tiptoes gracefully around the subject of the city's nuclear reactor. But *Lonely Planet* must work in a mention somehow, since Sassanian ruins are nearby, and curious tourists who point their cameras in the wrong direction are almost certain to face arrest as potential Israeli spies. The guidebook notes this awkwardly, and then moves on.

Moves on to what? What could be more intriguing than a forbidden nuclear site and bloodthirsty sexagenarians sworn to defend it? The answer is predictable: more Sassanian ruins. In lieu of teaching tourists about Iran's endlessly fascinating politics, *Lonely Planet* devotes its thickest chunks of text to Iran's endlessly fascinating ancient and premodern history. The retellings are a bit drab, but they are not ignorant. And they serve the main purpose, which is to fill a guidebook with literate prose about Iran's past in order to avoid uncomfortable questions about Iran's present.

The backpacker who arrives in Iran caring for nothing but the distant past will find an informed and nonjudgmental confidant in the *Lonely Planet* guide. It is only too willing to transport backpackers into an Achaemenid fantasy land, a Persian reverie in which thoughts of ripped-out fingernails and creepy Basij goons are painlessly banished. Perhaps the guide's users truly dig Persian history; I cannot know. But I do know that in months of travel in Iran, I met not one *Lonely Planet* traveler who could tell me the difference between Persepolis and Ctesiphon, either before or after visiting the former of the two sites. That legions of tourists care not a whit about Persian history, and yet carry a guidebook replete with trivia about it, suggests that among some of them, the interest in premodern Persia is a grand evasion of modern Iran.

The irony is that the most lavish modern patron of ancient Persian kingship was the Shah—one of the few historical players who get no kind words in *Lonely Planet*'s potted history. And yet in the guidebook's pages, his obsessions are duplicated, and so are his fatal inattentions. In the late 1970s, the Shah invoked the permanence of the peacock throne to fool the United States into thinking popular discontent at his dictatorship was the passing obsession of a few religious loons. Now, invocation of the same past is taking the place of honest discussion of another regime's excesses—and another populace's revolutionary fervor.

Edward Said's school of cultural criticism scolded Orientalists for treating foreign lands as permanently stunted, stagnant troves of exotica, pleasure-museums for historians eager to subdue the East by studying it. For these travelers and scholars, a swath of Earth was frozen in the age of Xenophon; they adduced Frazerian ancient customs more seriously than I, as if the Persian character had not changed in a thousand years—or, indeed, as if it ever really existed in the first place. The misguided belief that nothing novel could spring from the deserts of Persia left us shocked by the novel evils that suddenly did arise in 1979.

It is a mildly cheering thought that the same errors are being made again, and that the next ingenuity to bloom out of the Iranian desert could be still be a robust democratic revolt against the mullahs, rather than, say, an Iranian mushroom cloud. ♦

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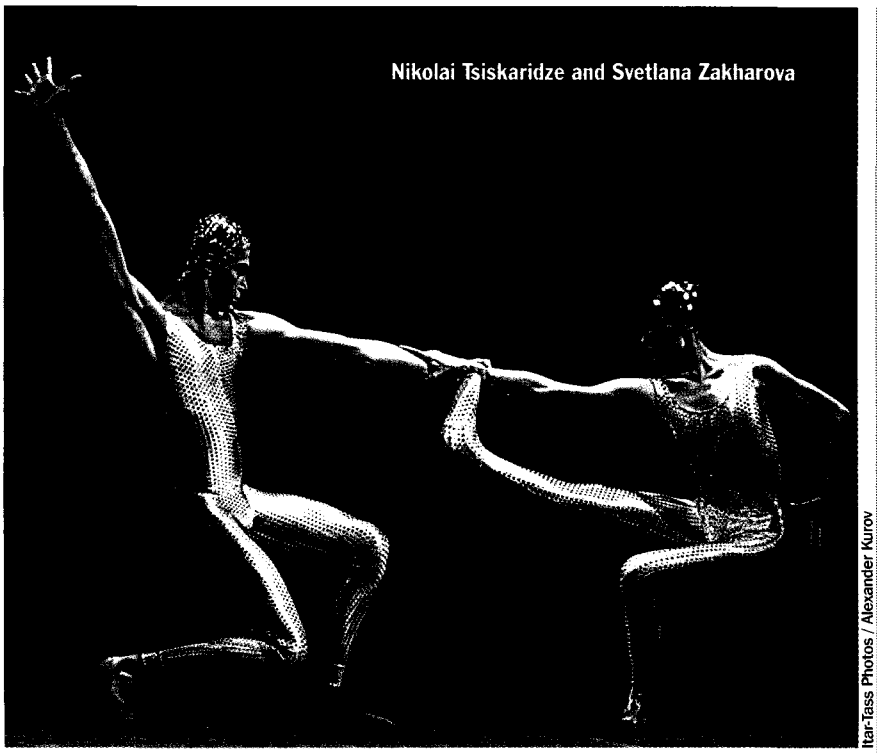
Nikolai Tsiskaridze and Svetlana Zakharova

Itar-Tass Photos / Alexander Kurov

The Bolshoi's Back

And updating some of its greatest hits.

BY PIA CATTON

The Bolshoi Ballet's recent two-week engagement at New York's Metropolitan Opera House was like a marvelous party. There were good stories, feisty politics, funny jokes (albeit, ballet jokes), and lots of dancing. Oh, and there was an orgy—a proper Roman one, with satyrs and red-haired courtesans. More on that later.

About halfway through this good time, I ran into a senior critic, who described America's reaction to this company when it toured the 1960s. Busloads of fans would follow it around the country, she reflected. In New York, the appeal was so broad that people who never went to the ballet (men) were captivated. Well, as good as the old days were, the current days are intoxicating. This time around, the Bolshoi presented four lavish full-length ballets: "Spartacus," "The Bright Stream," "The Pharaoh's Daughter," and "Don Quixote." These are quite different from each other, but they are similar in sensibility: big, unapologetically traditional, and entertaining.

The most important, in terms of politics, is "The Bright Stream," a 1935 comic ballet set on a collective farm. Upon seeing the original production, Stalin banned this ballet and fired the choreographer Fyodor Lopukhov from his post as the director of the Bolshoi. Dmitri Shostakovich, who wrote the score, composed no more ballets. The author of the story ended up in the gulag.

Stalin's objections were said to be that the work did not accurately portray Soviet life. He was probably right: "The Bright Stream" makes a collective farm look like a blast. Think *Three's Company* at harvest-time.

The action begins when artists from Moscow visit a farm. Zina, the morale officer, realizes that she and the troupe's ballerina are childhood friends. She also realizes that her husband is smitten with the pretty dancer. Meanwhile, a pair of old dacha-dwellers join the festivities—and they, too, are flirting with members of the troupe. But those with roving eyes are quickly taught a lesson: Zina and her friends (including the ballerina) dress up as each other to trick and shame the would-be philanderers. After the disguises are revealed, there are laughs and a harvest party.

There is more acting and contemporary choreography than classical ballet here, which comes together nicely. The comedy unfolds clearly and with good timing. Nikolai Tsiskaridze, as the ballerina's partner, deserves special note. He disguises himself as the ballerina—and dances on point with surprising grace. The laughs are in the ballet jokes: Here he's a sad Wili from "Giselle," there he's a nymph from "La Sylphide." Though this ballet is already a gem, Tsiskaridze gave it even more sparkle.

Before this reconstruction, "The Bright Stream" had never been seen in the West. The choreographer of this production, who is also the Bolshoi's current artistic director, Alexei Ratmansky, labeled it a homage to those who suffered under Stalin. Which is only fitting.

Artistically, the most important ballet is "The Pharaoh's Daughter." It, too, had never been brought to these shores. Created in 1862, it was Marius Petipa's first hit, and its last performance (prior to this production) was in 1928. French choreographer Pierre Lacotte rebuilt it by way of limited documentation and a few elderly dancers who remembered

Pia Catton writes about the arts for the New York Sun.

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key details, including a few minutes of Petipa's original choreography.

Lacotte should be crowned with laurels: "The Pharaoh's Daughter" is a no-holds-barred spectacle. The story concerns an English explorer who, in an opium-induced dream, imagines himself a muscle-bound Egyptian. He saves the daughter of the Pharaoh from a brutal fiance. It takes three acts and a whopping 400 costumes to get this couple from the pyramids, to the jungle, to the palace, to the Nile, then underwater and back to dry land, and then to the pyramids again.

Svetlana Zakharova danced the lead, Aspicia, with Tsiskaridze as her Ta-Hor (the dreaming Brit). Zakharova has limbs that seem to go on forever. She dances as much with her arms as with her reed-thin legs. Tsiskaridze, whose stocky build brought heft to the stage, made for a devoted partner. Very much in tune and in line with each other, they dazzled even more together than apart.

The one truly Soviet ballet in this mix is "Spartacus." Monumental, dramatic, and laced with anti-German overtones, it gives a man of the people a chance to fight his lascivious captor. Yury Klevtsov danced the lead role with meaty passion. Svetlana Lunkina, as his beloved Phrygia, was captivating, especially in her morose sorrow. As for that orgy, it's a pretty tame affair—especially as compared with a later scene. Crassus's girlfriend gets a bunch of shepherds drunk, then lures them over to the Roman side by doing a full-on pole dance against a staff. Don't bring the kids.

On the other hand, things are perfectly wholesome in "Don Quixote." It was the first ballet of the run, and it had much in common with the first hour of a cocktail party: cheerful, though stilted. The ballerina I saw, Ekaterina Shipulina, did her best to keep the conversation flowing, but like any hostess, she could only do so much. No matter; the energy snowballed over the course of the two weeks. And by the final swish of the Met's curtain, the only thing left to do was go home in a state of bliss. ♦

Melancholy Longing

'Just Like Heaven' is the perfect romantic comedy.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There are three qualities essential for any successful romantic comedy. First, it has to be amusing. Not screamingly funny, necessarily, but lighthearted and diverting enough to hold one's attention. Second, there have to be a few eccentric secondary characters who will provide jolts of unexpected life. Since the three-act storyline of a romantic comedy—boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl—has a foregone conclusion and provides no suspense, there's a limit to how surprising and interesting the main characters can be.

Finally, and most surprising in light of the fact that the movie in question is a comedy, there must be a palpable undercurrent of melancholy. The lead characters in a romantic comedy must feel dissatisfied, must be aware that there is a gaping chasm in their lives, must feel themselves to be wounded and hollow. At the same time, they must be afflicted by a kind of reticence that makes them fear the chasm will never be filled.

That reticence, that lassitude, is what gives these movies their unique erotic charge. Every good romantic comedy features at least one scene in which the two lead characters are desperately hungry for each other, so hungry that the audience practically shouts out "Kiss her!" But for the characters themselves, it can't be that simple. If it were, there would be no movie. The impulsive act simply of shattering the invisible barrier between them, and giving in to their passion, seems impossible.

Before the sexual revolution, the main problem was the seriousness with which erotic intimacy was taken. Or there were other, more concrete, obstacles in the path of our would-be lovers during Hollywood's golden age. One of the characters might be engaged to somebody else, and so the kiss would be a betrayal. Or one has arrived at the moment of intimacy through an act of deliberate deception—by telling a really bad lie that, once confessed, will end the relationship forever.

With the advent of our more sexualized society, sex itself became the cause of the invisible barrier. Or, rather, the fear of sex. In the best modern romantic comedies (*When Harry Met Sally . . .*) both characters fear that erotic intimacy will destroy a friendship they both need more than sex. And they are right to fear it. The sex they do have doesn't make them fall in love with each other; the destruction of their friendship does. Fear of sex is an element of most present-day romantic comedies. The wildly raunchy *40-Year-Old Virgin*, which takes an unexpected turn into romantic comedy, pushes this to the logical extreme: The title character's efforts to avoid sex at all costs is misread by the woman he loves as enlightened understanding.

Someone once said that every popular song has to figure out a new way to say "I love you" in 32 bars. In the same fashion, every romantic comedy must figure out a way to keep two characters apart for 90 minutes who are destined to be together—and without driving the audience crazy. Marc Levy, a French novelist, came up with a corker of a twist in his bestselling *If Only It Were True*, the most popular book published in France this decade. His story has been Americanized into the extraordinarily sweet new romantic comedy

John Podhoretz is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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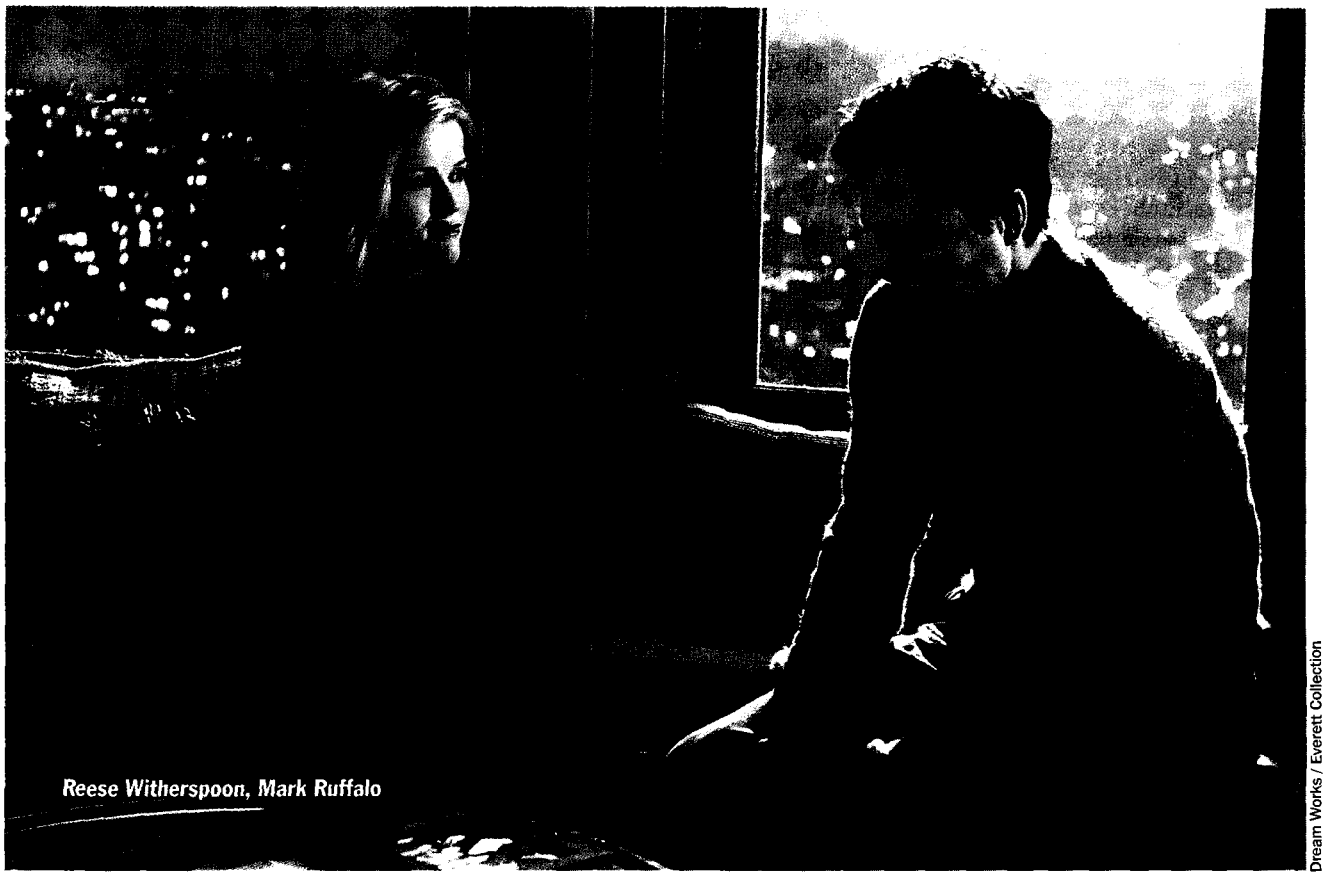

Reese Witherspoon, Mark Ruffalo

Dream Works / Everett Collection

Just Like Heaven.

Just Like Heaven fulfills the basic requirements of the classic romantic comedy. It amuses, even if it never makes you howl with laughter. It has three terrific secondary characters—a stoner psychic, a party-animal-turned-raging-mom, and a sexually unscrupulous psychiatrist—who light up the screen every time they appear.

But where this movie really scores is in the melancholy longing department. Elizabeth, a committed but companionless San Francisco doctor (Reese Witherspoon), is an hour late for a blind date arranged by her demanding sister (the uproarious Dina Waters) when a truck swerves into her car's path. A few months later, a reclusive and secretive young man named David (Mark Ruffalo) moves into a well-decorated and fully furnished sublet in Pacific Heights, only to find a very angry Elizabeth popping up here and there, insisting it's her place, demanding he use coasters, and in general being very annoying.

She can't quite remember who she is, and she keeps walking through walls and vanishing into thin air. Still, she insists she's not a ghost, even though no one but David can see her. And after a brief fling at thinking he's crazy, David decides she's real enough to be exorcised. That doesn't work, either, despite a consultation with a charmingly oddball clerk at an occult bookstore (Jon Heder of *Napoleon Dynamite*) who offers David the inscrutable opinion that the ghostly Elizabeth isn't really a ghost.

The relationship between them starts out as *The Odd Couple*, with Felix being dead, and moves onto *When Harry Met Sally* . . . with Sally being dead until, in its final 30 minutes, it becomes something new and original. For, of course, David and Elizabeth fall in love; and, of course, David's love for Elizabeth saves him from the despair into which he had fallen. Yet Elizabeth can't be touched, and must be saved from her in-between existence. The dilemma is that by saving her, he will lose her.

Reese Witherspoon is delightful and touching here, but the movie really belongs to Mark Ruffalo. Ruffalo, who turned in one of the great performances of our time as the wounded brother in the wonderful *You Can Count on Me* five years ago, doesn't have the physical authority of a movie star—and thus it seems entirely understandable for him to be almost instantly overwhelmed and under the thumb of the tiny but very authoritative Witherspoon. What Ruffalo has, more than any other young American actor now working, is the ability to convey a world of feeling through his soulful eyes and his expressive body language. You believe he is grieving as the movie begins, and you believe he begins to come alive as he involves himself in Elizabeth's plight.

Just as David and Elizabeth yearn for each other hopelessly, you yearn for them to find a way to be together. And that's the final element of all successful romantic comedies—that they manage to trick you into worrying the ending might be an unhappy one when you know full well that, in the end, boy always gets girl. ♦

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Books in Brief

***John Simon on Music: Criticism 1979-2005* by John Simon (Applause Theatre & Cinema, 504 pp., $27.95); *John Simon on Film: Criticism 1982-2001* (Applause Theatre & Cinema, 700 pp., $29.95); *John Simon on Theatre: Criticism 1974-2003* (Applause Theatre & Cinema, 840 pp., $32.95)** For more than thirty years, in the pages of what must be almost that many different magazines and newspapers, critic John Simon has been patrolling the American cultural landscape and delighting a devoted readership with his essays and reviews (see page 35). But it's only this month, at long last, that highlights from Simon's matchless career have finally been gathered up and made available in hardback form. There being so many such highlights, in fact, Applause Theatre & Cinema Books has not unreasonably decided to publish three separate volumes of Simon's characteristic wit and erudition, one each on music . . .

> How relative things are! The composer Ned Rorem, who knew Francis Poulenc (1889-1963) well, told me not long ago that when he now performs Poulenc's works, he no longer calls the Frenchman a minor composer; he was clearly major. Some time earlier, the piano virtuoso Charles Rosen told me that he was once conned into playing the piano part in a recording of Poulenc's Sextet. It should have been billed, he thought, as "Charles Rosen Plays Sh—t."

movies . . .

> We were teased by the advance reports: parts of *Basic Instinct* were so sexually explicit, they had to be cut. Of course, in Europe the film would be shown uncut, as presumably in the casette version to be eventually released in the U.S., but here and now puritanism would be served. In such a climate of illogic, it may be too much to expect the movie to make sense.

and live drama . . .

> Whoever butchers *Long Day's Journey Into Night* isn't merely slaughtering hogs or cows; he is slaughtering the greatest play written by an American. This squarely places Jonathan Miller, the British director of the present revival, into the category of master butcher extraordinary. I have seen bad productions of this towering masterpiece, but none that so ingeniously and incontrovertibly totaled it. If the butchers' guild of Nuremberg competed for a prize, Miller could be their Walther von Stolzing.

—David Tell

***Do As I Say (Not As I Do)* by Peter Schweizer (Doubleday, 272 pp., $22.95)** Peter Schweizer's *Do As I Say (Not As I Do)* is an entertaining exposure of the hypocrisy among some prominent liberals. In a series of 11 profiles on leftist icons from Noam Chomsky and Al Franken to Hillary Clinton and Ted Kennedy, Schweizer reveals that the most vocal liberals do not practice what they preach.

One may initially question the author's purpose. So Gloria Steinem got married, and Ralph Nader has a knack for real-estate investing. Who cares? Schweizer's answer provides the book's *raison d'être*: "Experience has taught these individuals that their ideas just don't work. When it comes to fundamentals . . . they suddenly forget about affirmative action, environmentalism, progressive taxation, and antiglobalist hostility."

For example, Michael Moore is, among other things, a race-baiter who chastises whites for excluding minorities from executive positions. Schweizer then contrasts Moore's public pronouncements with his own dismal record of hiring minorities in his media projects. Schweizer appropriately stresses that Moore's behavior does not stamp him a racist, merely a hypocrite.

A liberal apologist might attempt to deflect Schweizer's charge of hypocrisy by citing the "tragedy of the commons" (i.e. one may argue that individuals can legitimately favor liberal action by society acting in concert, yet reject an individual's obligation to initiate such action alone).

Hence, Nancy Pelosi's advocacy of worker unionization need not contradict her employment of only nonunion workers at the Napa hotel she co-owns.

This bit of sophistry, however, cannot survive these liberals' shrill denunciations against others engaged in such individual action. These discordant cries are the hallmark of Schweizer's subjects and mark their hypocrisy in demanding greater piety in others' behavior than in their own.

Schweizer concludes with a suggestion. When next confronted by a liberal pontificating on moral or political issues, "the first question you should ask is: Sure . . . but do you really live your life that way?" Sounds right.

—Eric Wasserstrum

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Though Senate Democrats professed to want to hear more from Judge John Roberts, his nomination hearings at times featured more talking by senators than by the nominee. —News item

Parody

and you can well imagine the high esteem in which I held Thurgood Marshall, who was not only a pioneering civil rights lawyer but also the first African-American justice of the Supreme Court.

Sen. McDUCK: Now, Judge Roberts, if we can move away from that for a moment, and I see my time is drawing to a close, it's clear to the committee, and it's clear to this senator, that you have a fine academic background, first in your class and everything, and I'm delighted to see your lovely family here, if I may say so, and of course my old colleague Fred Thompson, and I think everyone here, Democrat and Republican, is in agreement with me, regardless of party or political ideology, that you have an impressive record of public service, under President Reagan and then under the first President Bush, and I certainly enjoyed our meeting, our private meeting, in my office, some weeks ago, after you were appointed by the President, but before Chief Justice Rehnquist had passed away, where I had an opportunity to get to know you better personally, although you appeared before this committee, as you'll recall, two years ago when you were appointed to the D.C. Court of Appeals, and in that meeting, as I say, I had an opportunity to share with you some of my very deep concerns about issues that I think the Court, in its position as, well, as final arbiter of the Constitution, is likely to revisit in the very near future, perhaps even in the next term, given that the Constitution is the framework, created by the Founders, that basically guarantees those fundamental freedoms that we enjoy as Americans, and I've noticed, and it's been very troubling to me, frankly, and I know to others around the country, particularly to those people, those less advantaged people, who feel that the Court is their last line of defense to preserve those freedoms against efforts to roll them back, that based on some of your comments in these documents, that the White House, Mr. Chairman, was very reluctant to make available to the public, that your commitment to those hard-won freedoms, freedoms that were won by difficult, very difficult, efforts we can't even begin to comprehend, and defended by the blood and toil and sacrifice of the fine young men and women of our armed forces, that your commitment to the freedoms we as Americans have every right to consider our birthright, is not as strong as I would be comfortable to see in a Chief Justice of the United States.

Mr. ROBERTS: Once again, Senator, I appreciate your concerns and, of course, am always mindful of the wisdom of the Founders, and the sacrifices of our brave men and—

Sen. McDUCK: Do you see what I'm getting at, Judge Roberts? This is a matter, I think, of particular concern not only to me, and I think to most of my colleagues, but to many people who are also concerned, and I don't want to characterize your

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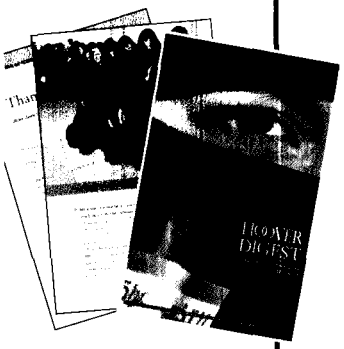
The False Promise of Autocratic Stability

HOOVER DIGEST
RESEARCH AND OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY



FREE ISSUE

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In my travels to roughly fifty countries, I have been thrown out of only one—Uzbekistan—just a few months after its emergence as an independent state under its first and only president, Islam Karimov. My crime: meeting with human rights activists.

At that time, Karimov's campaign to limit contact with Westerners was not considered a strategic concern for U.S. officials. Immediately following the USSR's collapse, the central aim of American foreign policy in Central Asia was to strengthen Uzbekistan's independence, thus ensuring that the Soviet Union was not reconstituted. Karimov has ruled Uzbekistan as a dictator, yet his repressive ways never impeded his developing close ties with the United States. In the 1990s, Uzbekistan emerged as an active participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace program and appeared eager to check Russian influence in the region.

The early strategy of engaging with Karimov's regime reaped huge short-term benefits for the United States in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Without hesitation, Karimov allowed U.S. and other NATO forces to use Uzbek air bases during the invasion of Afghanistan. The Uzbek base in Karshi-Khanabad proved a great asset in deploying U.S. forces in the region.

Moreover, Karimov's regime looked as though it would be an asset in fighting the war on terror because he claimed that it was successfully fighting the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a fundamentalist terrorist organization. Karimov's method of rule seemed both pro-American and stable, atypical of that region.

Autocrats, however, never make for good allies in the long run. First and foremost, the internal stability that dictators provide is never permanent. In the face of societal unrest, oppressive autocrats eventually fuel societal resistance by resorting to even more repression to stay in power, sidelining moderates and strengthening extremists, such as Islamic fundamentalists. These situations rarely serve U.S. interests. Second, they answer to no one and can reverse external commitments at a moment's notice. Friendly dictators quickly become hostile.

Karimov today is demonstrating the limits of relying on autocrats as allies. On May 13, he ordered troops to fire on unarmed demonstrators in Andijon, killing hundreds. The circumstances that sparked this massacre remain murky, but his response has been crystal clear: more repression. Even more surprising has been his decision to blame the West for the Andijon tragedy and turn against the United States. Our once stable and solid ally in Central Asia has now embraced Russian president Vladimir Putin and called for the eviction of U.S. forces. Our close association with Karimov is also an embarrassment to President Bush's liberty doctrine.

Even more threatening is the combustible political situation in Uzbekistan. Thirteen years of dictatorship have not reduced the terrorist threat to Uzbekistan or the region; any regime that must slaughter its citizens to remain in power is not stable. In banking on Karimov as our ally, we are squandering the opportunity to foster the kinds of democratic institutions that make for more enduring U.S. allies.

—Michael McFaul

Michael McFaul is the Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

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